

DO-IT-YOURSELF GARDEN PROJECTS AND CRAFTS

60 PLANTERS, BIRD HOUSES,
LOTION BARS, GARLANDS, AND MORE!

DEBBIE WOLFE



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Preface

I wasn't always a gardener. In fact, it wasn't until I got married that I became interested in growing things. However, I have always been a maker. As a child I created outfits from scrap fabric I took from my mom's sewing room and fabricated home accessories out of cardboard for my dolls. Even as a teenager, I sought ways to modify ordinary things to make them my own. I didn't seek inspiration from outside until I was older.

Growing and creating were in my blood. I used to spend my summers romping around my grandfather's garden in the rural countryside of South Korea. My grandfather had an amazing garden. I used to play under his immaculate grape arbors when I spent the summer at his home, which was located in a small village surrounded by rice paddies. My mother kept a small garden during the times my father's military career brought us back to the US. It was mostly because she wanted to grow Korean vegetables she wasn't able to find in a store.

My husband has always been interested in growing things. He also grew up with a family garden, and he continued this tradition when we got married. Wherever we lived, we had a garden. At first it was a collection of vegetables and herbs in pots; then as we became homeowners, our garden grew to take up a good portion of our large backyard. I honestly didn't get into the gardening until after our first son was born. Sure, I cooked and ate the vegetables, but gardening was always my husband's passion. Once I finally got involved, though, I was hooked.

I discovered that a garden wasn't just a place to harvest vegetables. It is a canvas to create, a source for supplies, and home to a myriad of critters. As I started to learn how to cultivate plants, I began to investigate what all I could do with them. I discovered a whole new level of crafting and creating that I never knew existed simply by having a garden.

It wasn't until I decided to work from home that my passion for DIY and gardening came together. I decided to give the whole garden blogging thing a try. Working as a team, my husband and I started to record our gardening adventures online in 2013. He offered growing advice and I created detailed tutorials on crafts, recipes, and other DIYs that were garden related. My little home and garden blog, *The Prudent Garden*, launched me into a whole new career as a DIY writer. Five years later, I write DIY tutorials for DIY

Network, HGTV, Walmart, as well as my own website. I never dreamed that teaching others how to create and make things would be my career. Nor did I think I would be asked to write a book about how to use the garden and outdoors as an endless source of crafting inspiration. My life and career have taken an interesting turn of events. I hope to keep on creating and making and teaching others how to do so as well.



Introduction

Before I start any project, I look around to see what I can use. This includes items from my garden, yard, house, etc. There's always a way to repurpose an item or creatively use an object in another way. Being a DIY writer, my craft stash is probably bigger than the average person's. Maybe yours is too. I encourage you to take inventory of your surroundings. Branches, leaves, old garden tools, scrap fabric, rope—all of these items are waiting to be transformed into something amazing for your home.

If you find that you are stuck in a creative rut, my suggestion is to think like MacGyver. Yes, I am speaking of the eighties icon who could take paper clips, glue, scrap fabric, and a helium tank and make a hot air balloon. Perhaps you don't need a hot air balloon, but we should all learn from MacGyver's ability to take what he has, gather inspiration from it, and create something new.

There are sixty projects in this book and all use the MacGyver system in one form or another. Every project relies on home grown and foraged materials that will inspire creativity and capture the bounty of the seasons. I'll teach you practical and decorative projects for use in the garden and home. Some of the projects include canning lid plant markers, a produce gathering apron, a bug hotel, fabric grow bags, herbal bouquets, herbal lotion bars, and many more. "Reuse, recycle, and re-create" is my mantra.





Chapter 1



In the Garden

My garden is not just a place where I grow produce. It's a place where I find inspiration and crafting medium. There's nothing like getting your hands dirty and reaping the benefits at harvest time. Most of the plants I grow have a dual purpose; I always find an alternative use for the plant in addition to its common function. The projects in this chapter are for helping you get the most out of your garden chores and for adding a bit of fun décor to the space.

Wood Burn Garden Sign



Every garden should have a sign. Whether it's a welcome sign or a humorous one, a simple sign adds whimsy and a personal touch to your growing space. A garden sign doesn't need to be big or need to be made out of particularly nice wood. Irregular scrap wood is perfect for a garden sign; it gives it character and a handmade look. For this project, I use the pyrography technique, also known as wood burning. Pyrography has been around for centuries, probably since early humans created designs using the charred remains of their fires. Lucky for us, inexpensive wood burning styluses are now available to help us create amazing art.



Supplies

- Wood burner tool with round tip
- Scrap wood
- Sandpaper
- Printout of sign design (optional)
- Graphite transfer paper (optional)
- Small eye hooks
- Garden twine
- Pliers
- Polyurethane (optional)



Attach the rounded calligraphy nib to the wood burner tool. Plug in the burner and let it heat up. Lightly sand your board and remove any sanding dust with a dry, clean cloth. To trace your pattern onto the wood, lay the graphite transfer paper with the graphite side down on the wood. Lay your printout on top of the transfer paper. With firm pressure, trace over the words. Remove the papers.



Start by outlining the letters. Do not stay in one spot for too long—this will cause dark, uneven areas. Working one layer of burning over another deepens the tonal values of an area. Try to keep your movements fluid and make more

than one pass if needed.



Once you've finished outlining the letters, it's time to start filling them in. You can either fill in the spaces with small dots or with layers of short strokes. I did both. The key is to build up the layers until the area is filled with the shade you desire.



Once the wood burning is done, you can spray a coat of polyurethane or a protective finish onto the sign if you wish. To hang the sign, grab the pliers and the two eye hooks.



Place each eye hook 1 inch in from the top of each corner. Insert each eye hook by holding the top of the hook with pliers, then use the pliers to twist it

in place.



Cut a 12-inch length of garden twine and tie each end of the string to each eye hook.



Hang your garden sign with pride.

Gardener's Hand Scrub



Skip the gloves. Digging in the dirt with your bare hands will make you happier.* Research has shown that a strain of bacterium in soil, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, triggers the release of serotonin. Serotonin is a natural compound in our blood that elevates mood and decreases anxiety. So get your hands dirty! After a little garden therapy, your hands will need a good scrubbing. I love the combination of rosemary, lemon, and olive oil in this hand scrub. Each ingredient benefits the skin and senses. Gardener's hand scrub gently removes dirt, grime, and plant oils from hands while leaving them wonderfully soft.

*If you're pregnant, wear the gloves, particularly if you have cats around. Your soil may be contaminated with toxoplasma, which could negatively affect the fetus.



Supplies

- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 sprigs rosemary, chopped
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- ¼ cup castile soap (or dish soap)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 10 drops of clary sage essential oil (optional)



Add the lemon zest and chopped rosemary to the sugar. Mix to combine. The lemon zest has natural oils that gently cleanse the skin, the rosemary has antibacterial benefits, and the sugar exfoliates and moisturizes.



Now add the castile soap and olive oil, and mix together until it forms a paste. The soap will get rid of any stubborn residue and the olive oil will moisturize.



Add about 10 drops of clary sage essential oil, which is a natural disinfectant. You can also use tea tree oil, which helps with healing, or peppermint essential oil to add a soothing tingle.



Store the scrub in a sealable glass container. The hand scrub is safe to keep on the counter for daily use, but needs to be used up within a week. Make small batches of the scrub weekly, especially during the growing season. You'll find that your homemade gardener's hand scrub adds soothing relief for working hands.

Mason Jar Lid Plant Labels



For me, nothing says a bountiful harvest like a full shelf of jams, jellies, and pickles. Canning jars and rings can be used over and over again as long as the rings aren't rusty and the jars are chip-free. The lids, however, must be replaced after one use. I've always felt guilty about tossing those lids. In fact, I've always kept them in a separate bag thinking I will someday repurpose them. The idea struck me one day—plant labels!



Supplies

- Mason jar lids
- Nail polish remover or acetone
- Cotton pads
- Wood garden stakes
- Paint (optional)
- Paintbrush
- Plant names/photos printed from a laser printer*
- Acrylic transfer medium
- E6000 glue or liquid nails

*The ink for a laser printer yields a better result when transferring onto metal. Additionally, if your labels have words, they need to be printed in reverse so that they show up the right way on the lids. Your local office supply store will print or copy a laser printout for around 15 to 20 cents per sheet.



In order for the transfer to adhere to the mason jar lid, you'll need to remove the film and ink from the lids. Use nail polish remover or acetone and cotton pads to rub off the film.



Paint or stain the wood stakes.



Cut out the label to match the inner area of the lid. For a small mouth mason jar lid, that area is 2 inches in diameter.



Apply an even coat of acrylic gel medium onto the surface of the lid.



Place the label print-side down on the lid. Gently burnish the paper onto the lid to ease out excess glue and air bubbles. Let it dry completely.



To remove the paper, soak the lids in water for a few minutes. Gently rub the paper until it loosens from the lid. Go slowly! Rubbing too hard will remove some of the ink. You may have to let it dry and then soak it again to get all the paper off. Once the paper is off, let it dry for an hour. Then, paint a layer of the acrylic gel medium over the surface again and let it dry.



Glue the labels onto the tops of the wood stakes with the E6000 glue or liquid nails. E6000 glue needs time to cure—about 30 minutes to an hour to make two items stick together, and at least a full 24 hours for a permanent bond. This glue is extremely strong, waterproof, and worth the wait.



Pop your plant labels in the garden. They will add an attractive, personal

touch to your green space.

Origami Newspaper Seed Pots

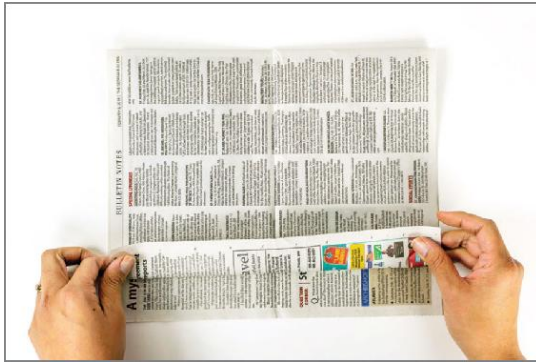


Starting plants from seeds will give you a wider range of plant varieties than you will find at your local garden center. Not only is it more cost effective than buying plant starts, you can experiment with a variety of flavors, shapes, and colors. In order to start seeds indoors, you'll need seed starting mixture and containers. An inexpensive way to make a bunch of containers for the seeds is to fold them out of newspaper. At planting time, the whole pot can be put right into the garden, making newspaper pots not only less expensive, but eco-friendly too.



Supplies

- Newspaper
- Seed starting mix
- Trowel



Take a full sheet of newspaper and fold it in half widthwise and then again lengthwise.



Make sure the fold of the paper is at the top. Then, fold each corner in towards the crease line. The top should resemble a triangle.



Take the bottom of the paper and fold it up to the base of the triangle.



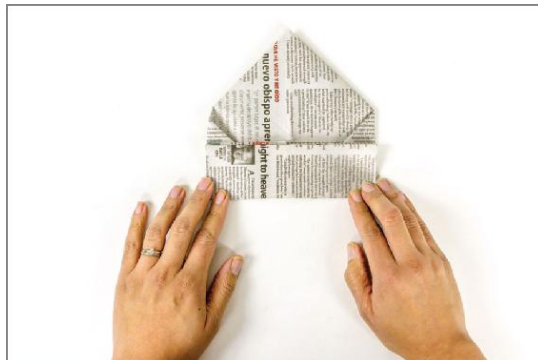
Fold the paper again; it should look kind of like the brim of a hat.



Flip the paper over and bring each side (one at a time) to the crease line in the center of the paper and fold.



Bring the bottom of the paper up to the new fold line and fold it down.



Fold once more until the base is level with side flaps.



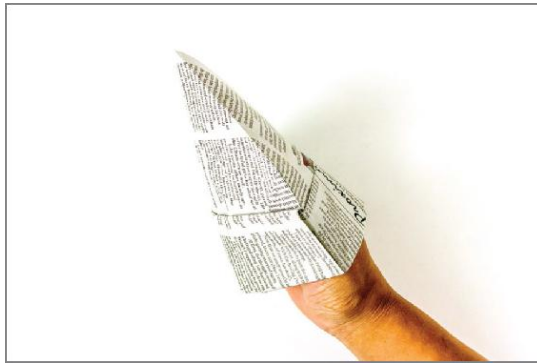
Now you should have a little pocket. Unfold the last fold so that you can slide the open end into the pocket and secure the sides of the pot.



Take the pointy tip of the paper and fold it down towards each corner, one at a time.



This will make a new crease line that will help us in the next step.



Stick your hand inside the opening and the bottom of your pot should form. The crease lines on the bottom should cave in.



Pinch around the sides of the pot to make it sturdier.



Fill the pots with seed starting mixture. Seeds should be started indoors around 4 to 6 weeks before the average last frost date.

Rain Chain



Rain chains are a beautiful and functional alternative to traditional gutter downspouts. Moreover, they make a lovely water feature to display in your garden or landscape. Rain chains guide rain water visibly down chains to the ground offering a soothing, soft tinkling noise. A simple rain chain can be made from just a chain. For a stronger and more visual impact, I fashioned one out of leftover garden hardware and building supplies. The result is a “chain” that’s not a real chain, per se. However, it operates the same way a rain chain should and adds architectural interest to my landscape.

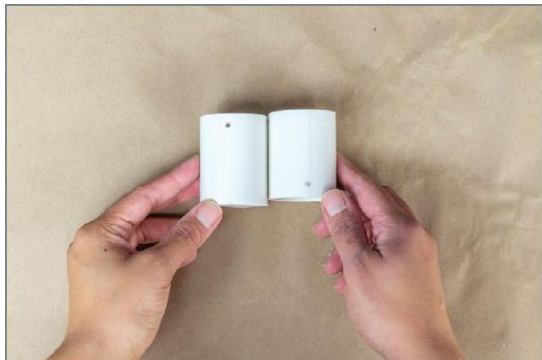


Supplies

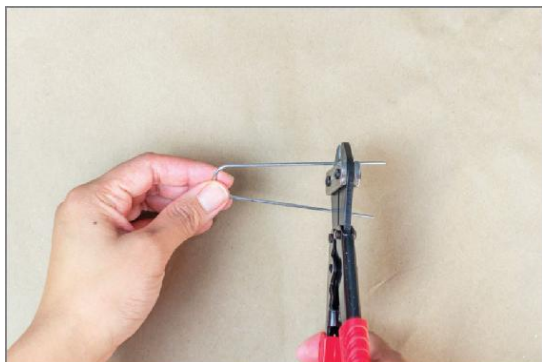
- 2-inch wide PVC pipe, cut into 2½ inch lengths (my chain had ten sections)
- Marker
- Drill with ¼-inch drill bit
- Spray paint
- 4-inch landscape pins
- 1½-inch split metal rings
- Small piece of scrap wood
- 2 wood screws
- Pliers
- Wire cutter



Mark a dot about ½ inch down from the rim of one end of each piece of PVC section. Make another dot 180 degrees opposite the first dot.



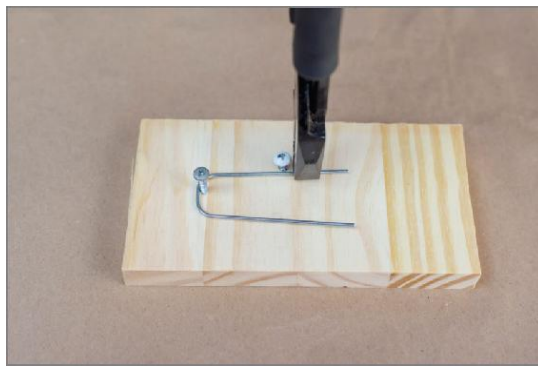
Do the same on the bottom of each piece of PVC, making sure the marks on the bottoms of the PVC are 90 degrees from the top marks. Each piece of PVC should have four marks total: two on top and two on the bottom. Drill holes in each of the marks using a 1/4-inch drill bit. Spray paint the PVC pieces and let them dry.



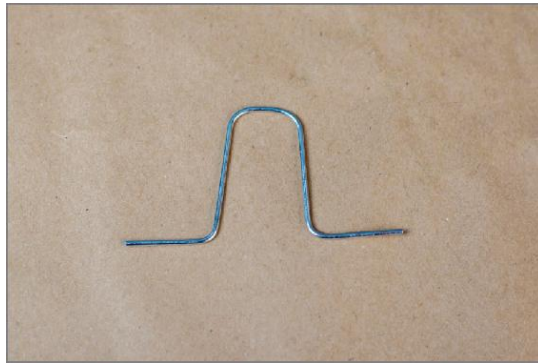
Trim off an inch from each landscape pin. Each piece of PVC will need two landscape pins and one split ring.



To make the 90-degree bends on the pins, it's best to make a jig to ensure consistency. Drill one screw into the scrap wood. Next drill the other wood screw two inches away from the first screw.



Place the landscape pin over one of the screws on the jig. Make sure the side of the pin is on the inside of the other screw on the jig. Place the pliers right below the space next to the lower screw. With a firm squeeze, bend one side of the pin 90 degrees. Flip the pin so that the straight side is parallel to the lower screw and repeat.



Each pin should have two 90-degree bends at the ends.



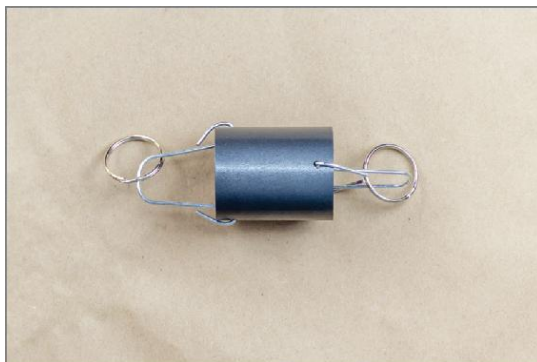
To put the rain chain together, start by inserting one end of each bent pin into one of the drilled holes on the pipe pieces.



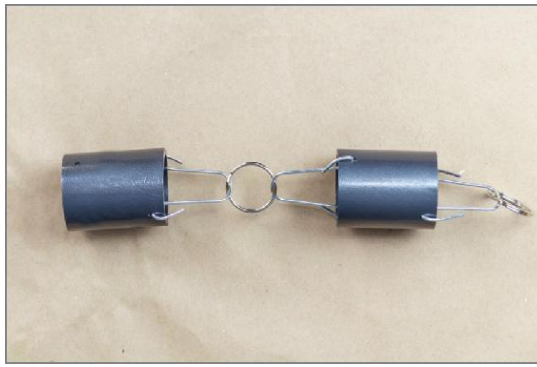
Slip a split ring onto the pin, then insert the other end of the pin into the opposite hole in the pipe piece.



Using the pliers, carefully bend the pin ends so that they meet the top of the pipe piece and the side of the pins.



Repeat on the other end of the pipe piece.



To attach another piece of pipe, slip the pin through one of the split rings before inserting the end of the pin into the hole of the pipe. Continue until you have the length of chain you desire.



Hang the rain chain from a shepherd's hook or from a *gutter downspout. The rain chain will add an interesting architectural element to your garden or landscape.

*To hang your rain chain from a gutter downspout you will need to get a rain chain hanging kit, available at big box home improvement stores or online.

Tool Cleaning Bucket



Keeping your tools in tip top shape is one of the best things a gardener can do to make garden chores pleasant. Prevention is always the best medicine, even for tools. This DIY is a simple, yet effective method to help keep tools clean and shovels and pruners sharp and ready to tackle any garden chore.



Supplies

- Bucket

- Sand
- Mineral oil or general-purpose lubricating oil



Fill a bucket with paver sand. Any sand will work, I just prefer to use the grittier sand.



Pour in mineral oil. The amount you will need depends on the size of your bucket and the amount of sand. In general, I start off with about 20 to 30 ounces of oil per one 50-pound bag of sand.



Mix in the oil. You want the sand to look moist but not dripping with oil. You can always add more oil if needed.



Add your tools. The abrasive sand will sharpen your tools when you take them in and out of the bucket. The oil in the sand keeps the tools well-lubricated and protects them from rust and dirt buildup.

Gardener's Tool Apron



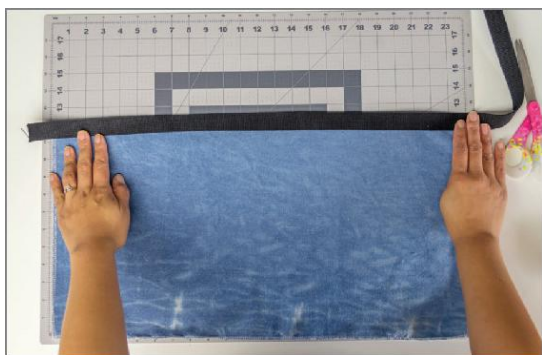
Move over tool belt, here's a cuter way to tote your garden tools. This tool apron has little pockets to carry seeds, snips, twine, gloves, or whatever you need to get your garden chores done. The simple design is flattering on all body types and it's an attractive, yet practical way to carry your garden tools.



Supplies

- 4 yards of 1-inch cotton webbing
- Scissors

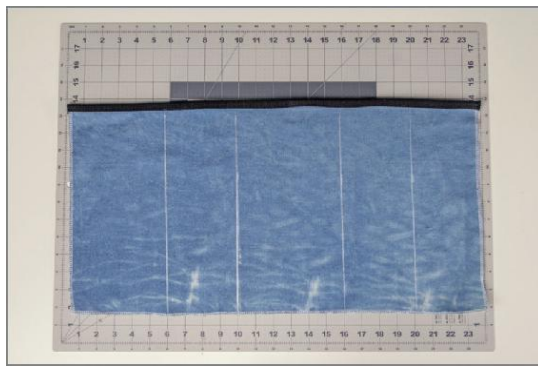
- 2 pieces of canvas fabric: 24 by 15½ inches and 24 by 12½ inches
- Iron
- Pins
- Matching thread
- Ruler
- Sewing pins



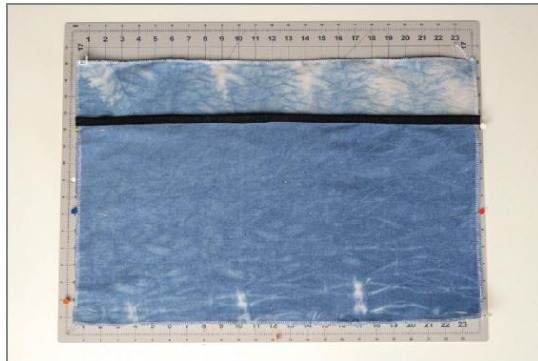
Cut a 24-inch length of cotton webbing. Line it along the top edge of the 24 by 12½-inch fabric piece with the right (pretty) side of the fabric facing up. This will be the front pocket of the apron.



Fold the width of the cotton webbing in half and iron along the whole length. This will sandwich the top edge of the apron pocket piece into the cotton webbing. Pin the webbing in place along this edge. Topstitch the webbing onto the canvas.



Trim the webbing off flush with the sides of the fabric. Now it's time to measure and mark the pockets. For my apron, I marked at $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches, $15\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and $19\frac{1}{2}$ inches from the left side. At each of these measurements, make a dot at the top, middle, and bottom of what will be the pocket. Draw a line to connect the dots.

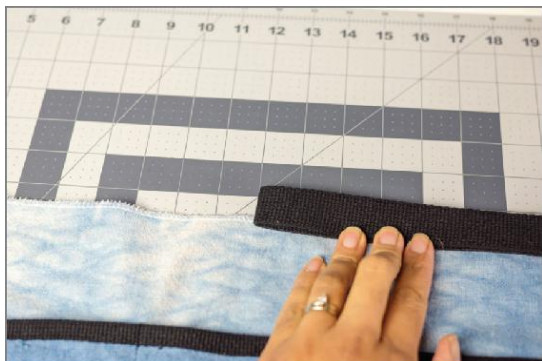


Pin the front pocket piece to the right side of the 24 by $15\frac{1}{2}$ -inch piece. Starting at the bottom edge, sew along the marks right to the edge of the cotton webbing trim; this will make the pockets of the apron. Be sure to backstitch at the start and stop of your sewing.

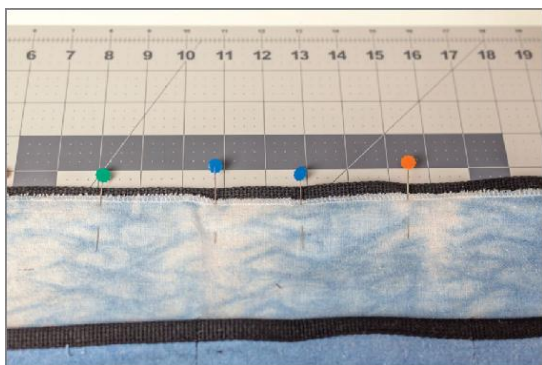


Cut a $15\frac{1}{2}$ -inch length of cotton webbing. Fold one end in $\frac{1}{2}$ inch into itself

and press. Line up this clean edge with the bottom of your apron, and then sandwich one side of the apron and pocket into the webbing. Pin in place and topstitch. Trim webbing off flush with the top edge of the apron.



Cut a 78-inch length of cotton webbing and fold it in half. Find the center of your apron and line up the folded edge of the webbing with the center of the apron.



Work out towards both sides from the center, pinning the webbing into place. Topstitch the webbing to the apron body. You should have about 27 inches of webbing on each side of the apron to use as ties. Trim the ties if needed. Sew along the ends of the ties to prevent fraying.

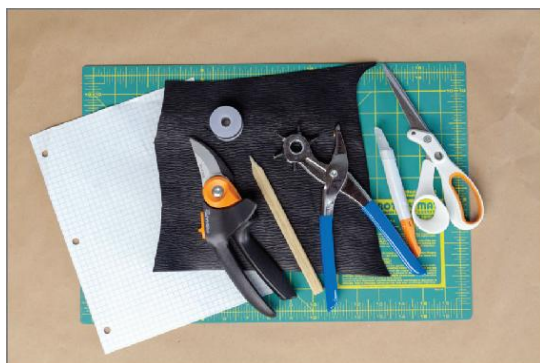


Your tool apron is ready for work. Pop in your favorite tools and tie it on. The apron easily rolls up for storage. Make an extra one to gift to a garden buddy.

Pruner Sheath



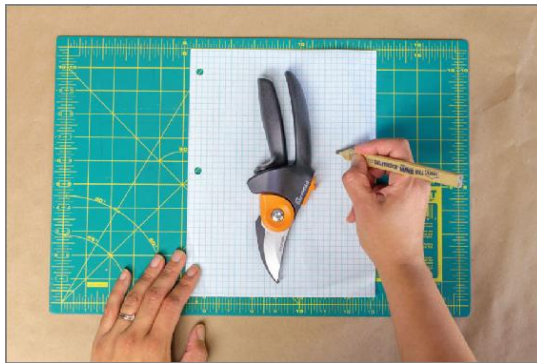
A good set of pruners is an essential investment for a home garden. It should have sharp blades and be strong enough to cut through thin wood stems. My favorite set of pruners did not come with a fancy leather carrying sheath. They are also a unique shape, so they do not fit into a standard envelope type sheath. No big deal. Making a custom pruner sheath is easy-peasy.



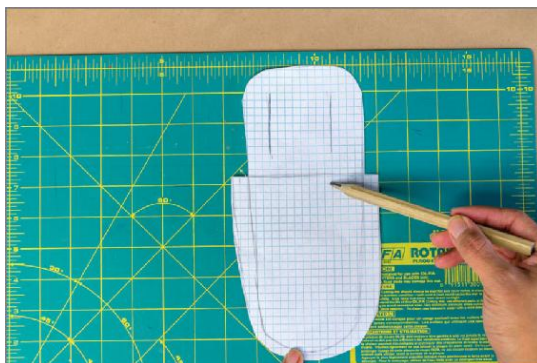
Supplies

- Pruners (for tracing)
- Graph paper
- Scissors
- Leather remnant (tooling leather or thick leather)*
- Leather hole puncher
- Craft knife
- Waxed linen thread
- Tapestry needle
- Self-healing mat

*I recommend only using 100 percent leather for this project. Leather is sturdy and will hold up to wear and tear. You can get tooling leather at most big box craft stores. I used a scrap piece of leather that is used for making purses or bags.



Lay your pruners on top of the graph paper and trace an oval shape around the pruners. Give yourself about an inch of space between the edge of the pruners to the outside perimeter of the sheath.



Now you need to draw the pocket that will hold the pruners. The pocket piece should be $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wider all around the bottom half of the sheath. Don't go too big; if the pocket is too big, the pruners will fall out when you bend over. I drew a line about a third of the way down from one end of the oval and sketched $\frac{1}{2}$ inch around the bottom two thirds of the sheath. Draw 2-inch long

parallel lines on the top third of the oval, 1 inch in from the sides. Cut out the template.



Fold the top third of the template down. Place the template onto the back side of the leather and trace around it. This is the pocket of the sheath.



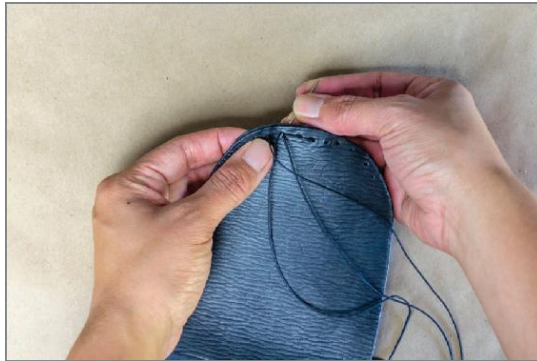
Open up the template. Cut off the extra $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch area you drew in for the pocket. Then, trace that piece onto the leather. Cut out the two pieces. Place the back template piece onto its matching leather piece and cut in the 2-inch slits.



This is where the sheath will slide onto a belt.



Lay the pocket piece on top of the back piece of leather with the wrong (rough) sides touching. Rotate the leather punch tool to the smallest puncher. Punch holes $\frac{1}{4}$ inch apart through both pieces of leather around the bottom of the pruner sheath.



Thread the tapestry needle with a length of the waxed linen thread. Sew the bottom of the pruner sheath together using a backstitch.



With the bottom secured, it will be easier to line up and punch holes in the sides of the sheath. Do one side at time. Remember that the top pocket piece is larger than the back. It will be easier to pinch the leather pocket piece in the middle to get it to bulge out so that the sides line up before you start to punch

the holes.



Sew the sides using a backstitch.



Trim the edges of the sheath where they do not line up.



Insert your pruners to test the fit. If it seems a bit snug, no worries. Leather will stretch, which is why it is better to make the sheath a bit smaller than too big. Slide the sheath onto your belt or through apron straps and you are ready for work.

Aluminum Plant Tags



I like crafting with aluminum cans because they are inexpensive, easy to cut, and weatherproof. One of my favorite things to do with them is to make fun little plant tags to add to potted plants for gifts. Adding a metal stamped detail to the tag adds a personal touch that the recipient will appreciate.



Supplies

- Aluminum cans
- Heavy duty scissors

- Protective gloves
- Shape templates
- Pencil
- Mat (to protect table surface)
- Hammer
- Nail
- Tape
- Landscape pins
- E6000 glue
- Metal stamp kit (optional)



To prepare an aluminum can for crafting, you will need to remove the top and bottom of the can. A pair of heavy duty scissors will work great. You should wear a pair of protective gloves to prevent cuts. Aluminum is not as sharp as some metals, but the edges can cut. Start by piercing a hole just under the ridge of the top of the can and cut around it until the top is removed. Then, cut down the side until you get to the base of the can and cut off the end. Trim the edges. Once you have the ends of the can removed, you should have a rectangle of aluminum. Rub the piece of metal gently on the edge of a table in the opposite direction of the curve to flatten.



Lay a template onto the sheet of aluminum and trace with a pencil.



Cut out the design.



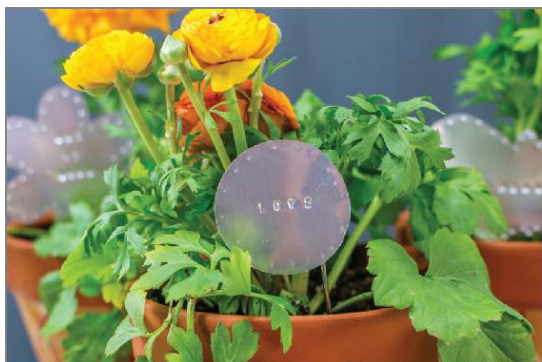
To add a design to the metal, place it on a flat surface and on a mat that will protect your tabletop. On the print side of the can, stipple a design using a hammer and nail. Tap the nail gently—the goal is to indent, not to pierce.



You can add words to your tag with metal stamps. To add words with the stamps, it's best to tape the aluminum onto a hard surface first. I stamp from the middle out to ensure even spacing.



Glue the landscape pins to the back of the tag with the E6000 glue. Let the glue set and cure.



Add a personalized tag to your potted plants for a personal touch. Aluminum plant tags are also perfect to use as plant labels in the garden.

Wind Spinners



These whimsical wind spinners will dance in the breeze and delight you with their mesmerizing motions. Wind spinners will add a touch of fun to your garden and make for an interesting conversation piece. They are a perfect way to repurpose old Christmas ornaments into garden art.



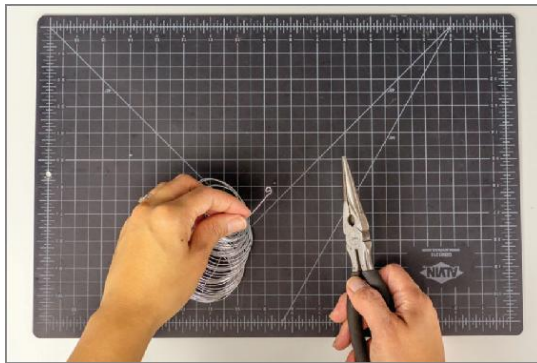
Supplies

- 18-gauge wire
- Needle nose pliers

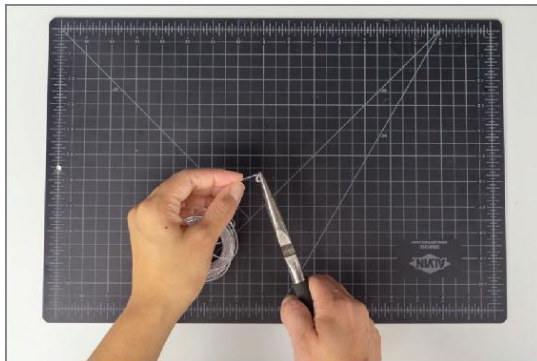
- Small ball ornaments
- 2-pound fishing swivel
- Wire cutters



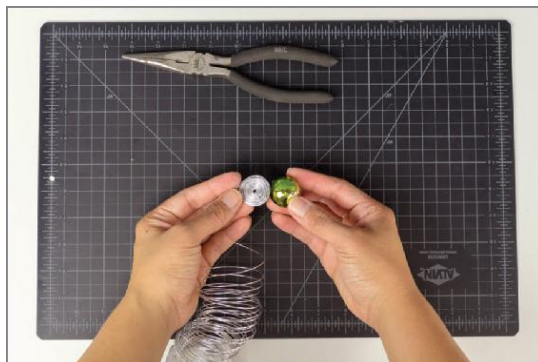
Grab the end of the coil of 18-gauge wire with the needle nose pliers.



Make a simple loop by wrapping the wire once around the pliers.



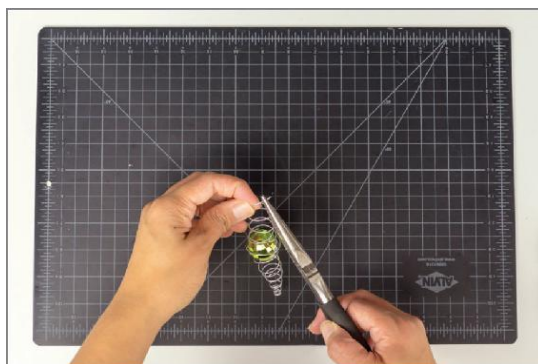
Hold the loop firmly in the middle of your pliers and, with your finger, push the wire downward to wrap it around the first loop. Do this until you have the desired size. You will need to adjust the pliers as you go.



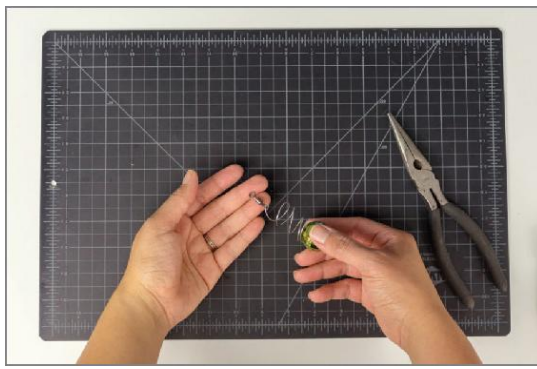
The coiled disk needs to be as wide as the ball ornament. Once you get the coiled disk to the right size, cut it off from the rest of the wire.



Use the tip of the pliers to push out the coil, making it into a spiral.



Insert the ornament into the wider top part of the coil. Make a small loop at the top of the spiraled wire.



Slip the fishing swivel through the loop. The fishing swivel will allow the wind spinner to spin freely.



To hang, make a hook with a short piece of wire. Slip it through the top of the fishing swivel and then onto a garden stake or small shepherd's hook. Place the wind spinners in a flower or herb bed and watch it dance in the wind.



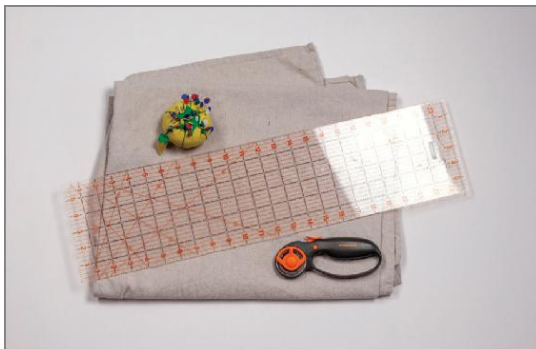
Chapter 2*Harvesting the Bounty*

There's nothing as satisfying as gathering your own harvest. All the time spent in prepping and caring for the garden is well worth the effort when you get to enjoy the fruits of your labor. A little help (big or small) is always appreciated during harvest time.

Market Tote Bag



I love reusable totes. Even though I grow a good amount of my own produce year-round, I do like to check out my local farmers markets for vegetable varieties I do not grow and for other goodies. I saw a cute canvas tote at Target with vintage farmers market graphics and thought, “I can make that!” These totes are an easy sewing project that will take you less than an hour to whip up.



Supplies

- Canvas drop cloth (or canvas fabric)

- Quilting ruler
- Scissors
- Pins
- Pinking shears (optional)
- Iron
- Fabric pen or marker
- Iron-on transfer paper (optional)



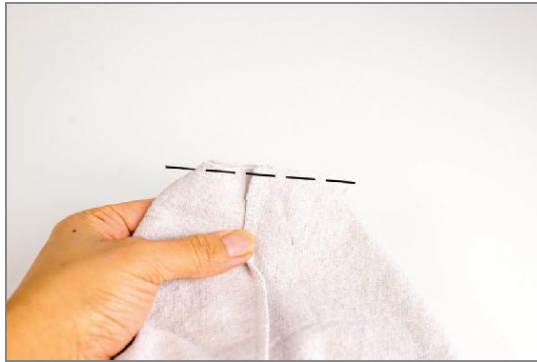
Wash and dry your drop cloth or fabric. Pre-washing helps to remove any chemicals in the fabric and shrinks it prior to sewing. I used a natural canvas drop cloth I purchased for less than eleven dollars at Home Depot. It's 50 square feet and sews up beautifully. Cut two 19 by 17-inch pieces of canvas. This will be the body of the tote.



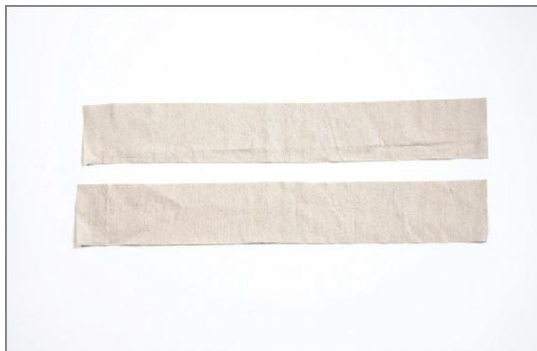
Pin the two pieces of cut canvas together. Cut 2 by 2-inch squares off the corners of the bottom end of the fabric. These will be the bottom corners of the tote.



Sew a 1/4-inch seam along the sides and bottom of the pinned fabric. Do not sew the corners. At this point you can finish the seams with a serger machine (if you have one) or with pinking shears to prevent fraying.



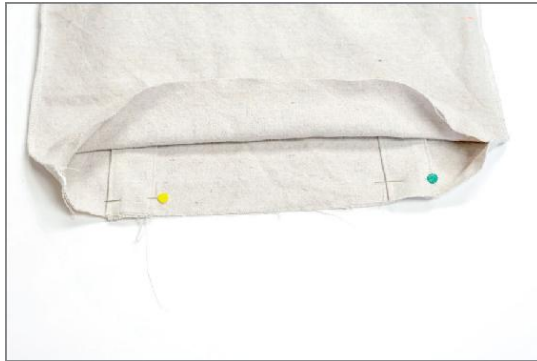
Bring the corners together to form a straight line. The seam for the bottom of the bag should be perpendicular to the corner line. Sew a 1/4-inch seam allowance across, sealing the corners shut.



For the handles, cut two 40 by 4 1/2-inch pieces of canvas.



Fold in the fabric $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from each long side. Press down the fold with an iron. Then, fold the fabric exactly in half and press down the seam again. Sew a $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch seam allowance along the edges of the handles. Repeat for other strap.



Pin the handles 2 inches in from the sides and on the inside of the bag. Repeat on the opposite side (make sure the handles are not twisted in the process). Sew across the top of the handles, securing them to the body of the bag.



Turn down the top of the bag $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Pull the handles out from the top.



Turn down the top of the bag another ½ inch and pin. Sew across the top and bottom of the hem, securing the handles in place. Turn the bag right side out.



Your tote is ready to use as is or, if you wish, add a fun iron-on graphic.



Print the graphic you want to use onto iron-on transfer paper. If you plan to use words on your graphic, remember that you will need to print them in reverse so that they will show up properly on the bag. Also, you will need a piece of scrap wood or another hard, heatproof surface to place inside the bag before you apply heat. This will help protect the opposite side of the bag and allows for a better transfer.



Lay the transfer paper face down onto the bag. Place a scrap piece of paper on top of the transfer and iron (set iron heat according to transfer paper instructions). Remove the backing.



These custom market tote bags make great gifts too! Gift one full of garden fresh veggies to a neighbor.

Bento Bag



Bento is a Japanese-style packed lunch. The bento bag is really a bukuro, or Japanese market bag. It's a triangle-style bag typically made from one piece of fabric with two ends that tie in the middle. Whether you call them bento or bukuro, these simple bags can hold your lunch and so much more. I use them to store or carry vegetables, my knitting projects, and as gift wraps for my home preserves. The best part is that they do not require a lot of fabric to make—it's the perfect stash buster project.



Supplies

- Cotton fabric
- Quilting ruler
- Scissors or rotary cutter
- Iron
- Pins
- Sewing machine



You can make your bento bag any size to suit your needs. The key is that the size of the initial length and width rectangle needs to be evenly divisible by three.



My rectangle measured 17 by 51 inches. Here's the math: 51 inches divided by 3 equals 17 inches. So each square is 17 by 17 inches.



With the right, or pretty side, of the fabric facing up, fold each end in diagonally. Iron the folds.



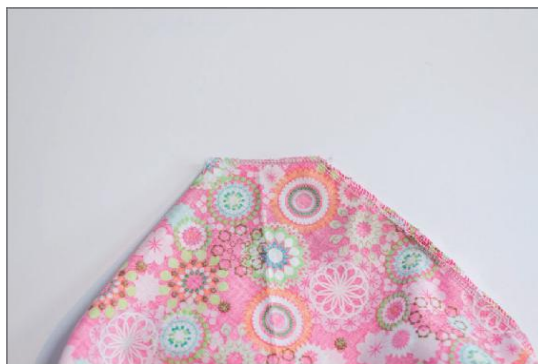
Fold along the diagonal of the middle square. Iron the fold.



Match outside seams together (A with A and B with B). Sew seams.



Flatten out the bag to form a square. Measure 1 inch down from each corner of the bottom of the bag and sew across. This will help square off the corners of the bag.



Trim off the excess fabric and turn the bag right side out.



Fill the bag with produce, knick-knacks, or whatever you want.



Tie the bundle closed. The tied handles are perfect for carrying your bag anywhere.

Custom Seed Packet



Seed saving is a way for gardeners to preserve a plant variety for the next year. Seed saving also saves you money. You get way more seeds than you would by purchasing them. Seeds need to be stored in a cool, dry environment and labeled. I love getting seed magazines in the winter. They are often full of attractive photos or illustrations. The colorful pages are perfect for making custom seed packets.



Supplies

- Seed catalog (or magazine/newspaper/printer paper)
- Scissors
- Seeds
- Sticker labels



Tear a sheet from the seed catalog.



To make the seed packet, the sheet of paper needs to be a square. Start by folding one corner of the paper to meet the side of the paper to form a right triangle.



Turn the page so the right angle of the folded triangle is on the right. Fold up the rectangular flap to the base of the triangle.



Cut off the rectangular flap. Now you have a square piece of paper.



Make sure the point of the folded triangle is at the top.



Make a cross flap by folding one of the corners across the middle to the other side.



Repeat with other side.



Fold the top triangle flap down and tuck it in between the layers of the top cross flap. Now you have a pocket to put seeds in.



Fill with seeds and label with variety name, date, and planting information.
Store in a cool, dry area.

Seed Tape



Some seeds, like carrots seeds, are just too small to handle. You end up broadcast sowing, then have to thin them out aggressively after germination. Many seed catalogs will sell pre-sewn strips of single or multiple varieties of seeds embedded in thin paper that are already spaced at the correct spacing for growing. It's a great idea, but they are expensive when compared to the amount of seed you get in a packet of seed versus the strip. The good news is that seed tape is simple to make with items you already have on hand.



Supplies

- Newspaper
- Seed packets
- Scissors
- Ruler
- Marker
- Small paintbrush
- Small bowl and spoon
- All-purpose flour
- Water
- Paper clips



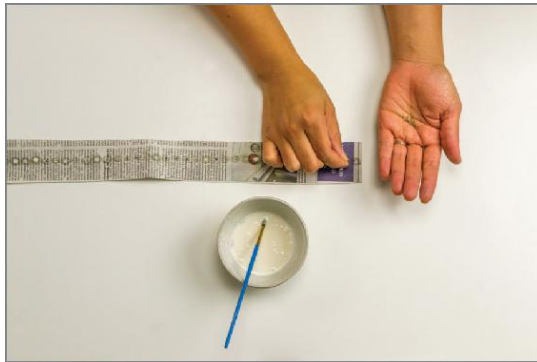
Cut the newspaper into 2- to 3-inch strips. Label the ends of the strips with the type of seed and planting depth information.



Mix 1 tablespoon of flour and 2 tablespoons of water to make the glue. The consistency needs to be similar to bottle glue or papier mache paste. Add more water and/or flour needed to achieve the correct consistency.



Read the seed packet to determine spacing of the plant. Use a ruler and marker to mark the newspaper at the recommended intervals for the seed.



Put some flour glue on each marker dot with the paintbrush. Go easy with the glue; the glue should be thin enough to see the interval dots. You can always add more glue if needed.



Add the seeds to the glue at the marked intervals. Allow the newspaper strips to dry completely (about 24 hours).



When the strips are completely dry, roll them up and secure with a paperclip or small rubber band. If you are saving the seeds for the following year, store the seeds in a glass jar in a cool, dark, and dry area.

Herb Drying Racks

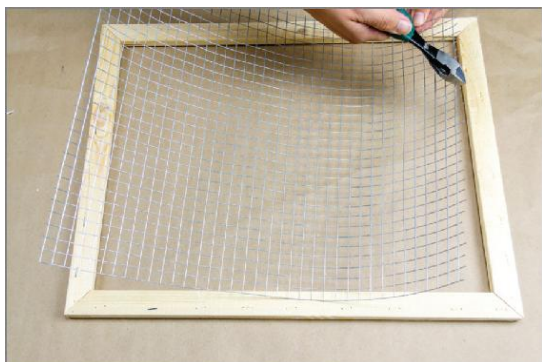


I dry herbs and flowers from my garden every year. Although I do own an electric dehydrator, it's loud and generates a lot of heat. Also, I'm not a fan of bundling my herbs and drying them upside down. The bundle takes longer to dry with that method and often the drying is uneven. Instead, I prefer to lay the plants out in an even layer on a screen. My herb drying rack is made from repurposed stretched canvases and hardware cloth. The racks can stack right on top of each other while allowing ample air flow and without taking up a bunch of space.



Supplies

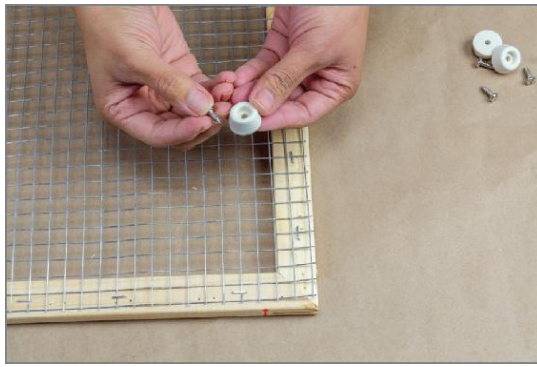
- 16 by 20-inch stretched canvas
- Wire cutters
- ¼-inch hardware cloth
- Staple gun and staples
- ⅞-inch rubber screw-on bumpers
- Clear duct tape



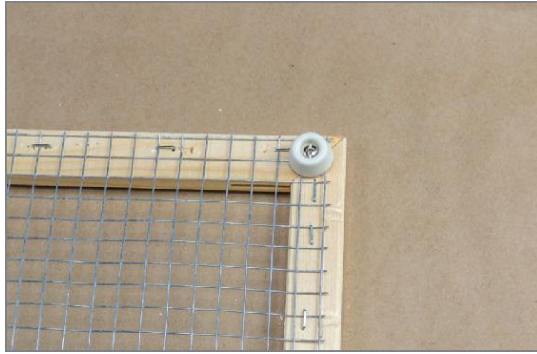
Remove the canvas from the frames. Cut out a piece of hardware cloth to about ¼ inch smaller than the frame. Trim off the point edges.



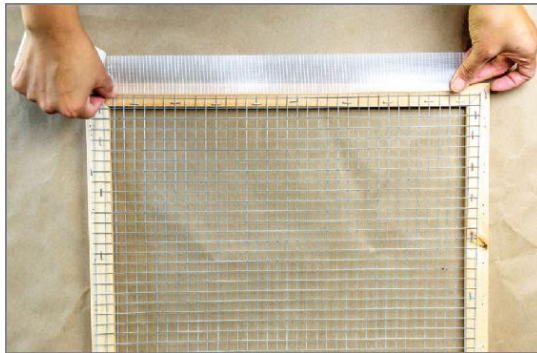
Staple the hardware cloth to the back, flat side of the frame.



The rubber bumper feet come in a pack of four and with a wood screw.



Attach each foot to the corners of the frame. The goal is to have the feet nest in the grooves of the top sides of the frames when they are stacked on top of each other.



Tape the edges of hardware cloth with a double layer of clear duct tape.



Lay herbs or flowers across the screens in even layers. Stack the racks for maximum space efficiency.

Macramé Produce Bag



Growing up, I had macramé plant hangers and crocheted doilies all over the house. Not only was my mother an accomplished seamstress, she was also a master in the art of macramé. Macramé is a textile made by a series of knots. In an effort to reduce the amount of plastic used in my household, I store produce in my own handmade knotted bags. These bags are particularly useful for veggies that need breathing space. They are also a great way to transfer your farmers market purchases home.



Supplies

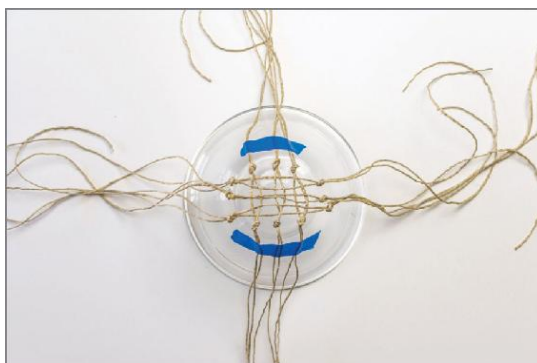
- Garden twine or thick cotton string
- Scissors
- Large glass bowl
- Tape



Cut twelve equal lengths of garden twine. Each length of my twine was 3 feet. Use longer lengths to make a larger bag.



Divide the strings into two groups of six. Arrange them on the bottom of an upside down bowl. The groups of string should intersect at the middle.



Tape down one set of twine. Take one piece of string from the second group and pull it over and under the horizontal strings. Continue with the others,

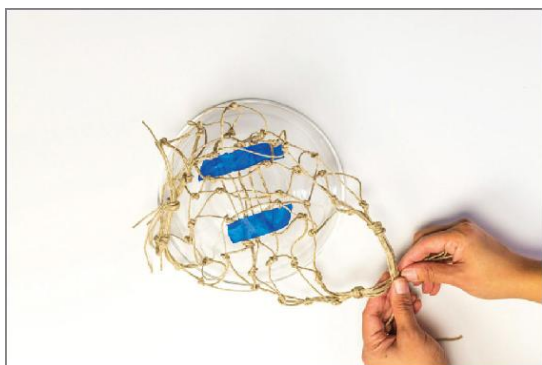
alternating rows. This will create a loose woven bottom for the bag. Knot the strings two by two, close to the weaving.



Take two strings from neighboring knots, and knot them together, about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch down from the other knots. Do this all around and keep alternating strings to form diamond shapes. Continue until you reach the desired size you want. Leave at least 10 inches of string at the ends in order to make a handle.



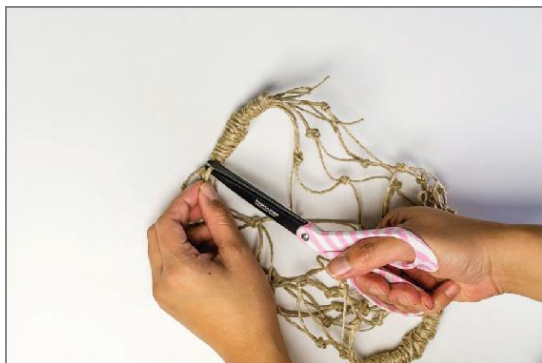
When you reach the desired size of your bag, cut the string ends to the same size and divide them into two groups.



Split the groups in two again and tie them together with a double knot to create a handle.



Take the end of the ball of twine and tie a knot at one side of the handle. Wrap the twine around the handle.



When you reach the other side of the handle, tie another knot to secure the wrapped twine and trim.



Store root vegetables, fruit, or any other large produce in the macramé bag.

Reusable Wax Wrappers



It can take up to 500 years for plastic to decompose in a landfill. There's always the option to recycle the plastic, but plastic cling wrap is not an item that many recyclers take. When researching a way to reduce my use of plastic wrap, I discovered an old-fashioned method of infusing cotton fabric with beeswax to make a waterproof, reusable wrapper. There are a few companies that make them commercially, but boy are they an investment! The DIY version is much more affordable and you can customize them with beautiful prints.



Supplies

- 100% cotton fabric
- Pinking shears
- Beeswax pellets
- Empty tin can
- Aluminum cookie sheet
- Small saucepan
- Paintbrush (use an inexpensive one that will not be used for another project)



Cut cotton fabric into rectangular or square pieces that will be large enough to wrap your food items. Trim the edges with pinking shears. This will prevent the edges from fraying.



Place the beeswax pellets in the tin can. Start off with a cup or so of the beeswax. Put the can in a saucepan with about three inches of water up the side of the can. Heat the water until the beeswax in the can is melted.



Use the paintbrush to coat a generous layer of wax onto one piece of fabric. The wax will begin to harden again once it starts to cool—don't panic, this is normal. Only coat one side. Lay the next piece of fabric on top of the first piece and repeat. Continue until all the fabric pieces are covered in wax.



Once the fabric pieces are coated, place in a 225°F oven until the wax is evenly melted and it has thoroughly soaked through the fabrics. Remove the baking sheet from the oven and lift off the top piece of fabric with tongs. Wave the fabric in the air to allow it to cool enough to touch, then hang it somewhere so that it can set. Repeat with the remaining pieces of fabric.



Once the wrappers have cooled, they are ready to use. Keep in mind that they will feel very tacky at first, but will mellow out fairly quickly. The end result will have grip but not be super sticky. After each use, run them under warm water and wash with a mild soap. Hang the wrappers to dry.

Harvest Gather Apron



After years of just using my T-shirt to hold my veggies, I decided it was time for me to design a better method. This apron uses the same principle as folding over your shirt hem to hold vegetables, but with a bit more flair. Made from sturdy canvas duck in a cute print, this apron has plenty of room for tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, and much more.



Supplies

- Canvas fabric: two 26 by 22-inch pieces and two 28 by 5-inch

pieces

- Iron
- 1 36-inch shoelace
- Rotary cutter or scissors
- Pins
- Plastic toggle spring stop
- Large bowl
- Sewing machine and accessories



Make the apron ties first. Fold the 28 by 5-inch pieces of fabric in half and press with an iron. Sew the long opening and one end shut.



At the end you sewed closed, sew another line at a 45-degree angle. Cut off the excess fabric.



Turn the straps right side out and press. Top stitch around the straps, leaving the non-pointed end open. Set the straps aside.



Fold down 4 inches at the top of each piece. Iron the 4-inch seam. Place the two 26 by 22-inch pieces of fabric together with the right (printed) sides touching. Pin them together.



Place the bowl on the corners of the apron body so that the edges of the bowl touch the edges of the corner of the apron. Trace the curve of the bowl onto the fabric. Repeat at the other corner.



Trim off the corners, following the curves.



Open up the top of the apron. Line up the unsewn ends of each strap to the inside top edge corner of the apron body. The strap ends should be placed inside of the two pieces of body fabric. Pin the apron body back together with the strap sandwiched on the inside.



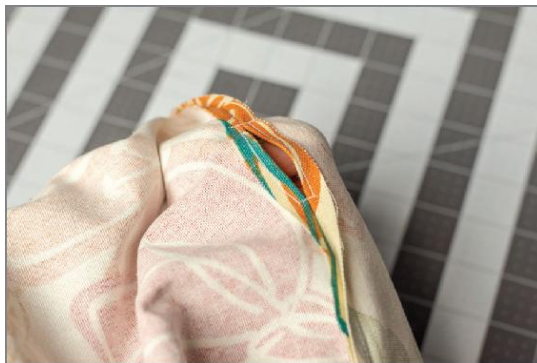
Fold the apron in half. Mark the bottom center of the fabric. Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ inch on either side of the bottom center point and mark it.



Sew around the sides of the apron, skipping the area where you marked at the bottom. Leave the top of the apron open.



Find the opening at the bottom of the apron.



Flatten out the seam around the bottom opening. Sew a box around the opening. This is the “buttonhole” that the toggle will rest in.



Turn the apron right side out. Press the seams. Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the edge around the apron (not including the top) and mark it. Top stitch around the edge, skipping the buttonhole at the bottom. Then topstitch around the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch offset you measured from the edge. Only go around the “U” part of the apron. You are making the pocket where the shoelace will be inserted. Do not sew the top of the apron.



Insert the end of the shoelace into a large tapestry needle. Thread the shoelace through the channel around the apron until it reaches the opening at the opposite side. Pin the shoelace ends down at each of the channel openings next to the apron straps.



Top stitch across the top of the apron, securing the shoelace ends and closing the top of the apron.



Trim off the shoelace ends.



Pull out an inch worth of shoelace from the bottom button hole. Insert it into the toggle stopper.



The apron can function as a regular apron.



When you are ready to gather your bounty, pull the toggle stopper to cinch up apron to create a basket. Fill with yummy produce.





Chapter 3



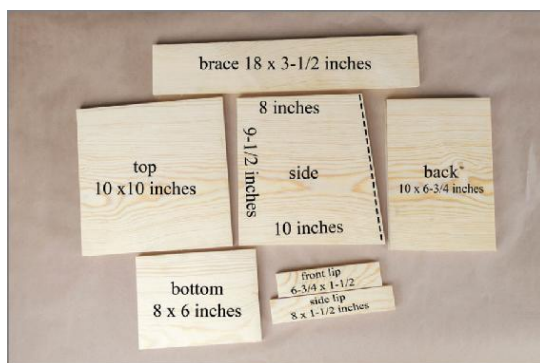
Critter Hospitality

Hearing birds chirping and watching busy bees buzzing around the garden is truly a treat. One important function of a garden is providing food and shelter for native wildlife. Gardening is a simple way to encourage biodiversity in the backyard.

Modern Nesting Box



Attract phoebes, robins, and wrens to your garden with a simple nesting box. A nesting box provides a safe place for the birds to build a nest and raise a family. Birds are a great garden helper and giving them a place to nest will help ensure more bird visitors each year. This box has a midcentury mod look that will add a bit of modern flair to your yard.



Supplies

- One 1 by 12-inch pine board,

cut to 4 feet long

- 1/2-inch finishing nails
- Saw
- Hammer
- Sandpaper
- Paint
- Drill and wood screw (for mounting)

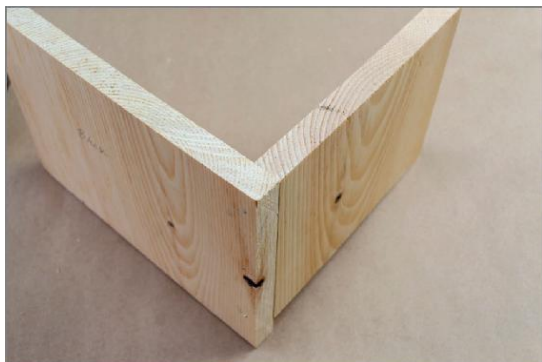
Cut List

- Back: 10 by 6¾ inches
- Bottom: 8 by 6 inches
- Side: start with a 10 by 9½-inch board*
- Top: 10 by 10 inches
- Front Lip: 6¾ by 1½ inches
- Side Lip: 8 by 1½ inches

*To cut the slope on the 10 by 9½-inch board, measure down 2 inches on one of the 10-inch edges and mark it. Draw a line from the opposite 10-inch point to the mark you made on opposite side. Cut along that line to get the slope.



The first step is to nail the back and the bottom together. Start by lining up the back and bottom boards so that the boards line up on a long edge. Partially nail three finishing nails on the back board.



Nail the back to the bottom board.



Next, line up the side board so that its 10-inch side matches the 10-inch side of the back board. Hammer it into the back board. Hammer the side board into the bottom board as well. There will be a $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch gap at the front.



Nail the side lip onto the side of the box.



Nail the front lip onto the box.



Center the top onto the box and nail.



Paint or stain the nesting box and back brace.



To hang, attach the box to the center of the brace with two wood screws. Hang the box at least 6 to 10 feet up from the ground on a wall or tree that faces north or northeast. Wait for a feathery family to move in.

Gourd Bird Feeder



Wild birds are pretty little creatures that will delight you with their songs and beauty. In addition to being pretty visitors, birds help manage the environment. Birds help keep the insect population in check, help with pollination, and are a great defense against weeds. A great way to attract more varieties of birds to your yard is with a feeder.



Supplies

- Dried gourd (choose one with a wide, round shape)

- Craft knife
- Jab saw
- 10-inch grapevine wreath
- Galvanized wire
- Drill with 1/4-inch drill bit
- Paint (optional)



This feeder is a “fly through” style, so it will have two openings. Sketch out an opening on the side of the gourd and on its opposite side.



Use the craft knife to make a slit on a part of the sketch outline. Insert the jab saw into the slit and, in a slow, careful motion, saw around the outline until the piece comes off. Repeat on the other side.



Once the pieces are removed, scrape out the dried membrane and seeds from inside the gourd. You can also soak the gourd in water to help loosen the dried membrane, then scoop it out.



Drill four evenly spaced holes on both sides of the gourd. Paint the gourd if you wish.



Nest the gourd onto the grapevine wreath. Cut a length of galvanized wire and insert it in through the first hole of the gourd, holding onto the end tail of the wire on the inside of the gourd.



Weave the galvanized wire through the stems of the grapevine wreath. Pull the wire back up and insert it through the next hole in the gourd and repeat.



To hang, drill a hole through both sides of the neck of the gourd. Cut a 12-inch length of wire and insert it through the holes, wrapping the wire back onto itself to make a circle.



Hang on a shepherd hook or on a tree branch.



The birds will be by to check out the gourd feeder in no time.

Toad House



A toad can eat up to 100 insects in a single night. Although they will eat beneficial insects as well as pesky ones, they are still worth attracting to your garden. Toads usually live in a small area and return to a favorite spot each evening to feed. They like cool, moist, and sheltered environments that happen to attract insects for them to munch on. Having a toad or two in your garden will help keep your garden pest free.



Supplies

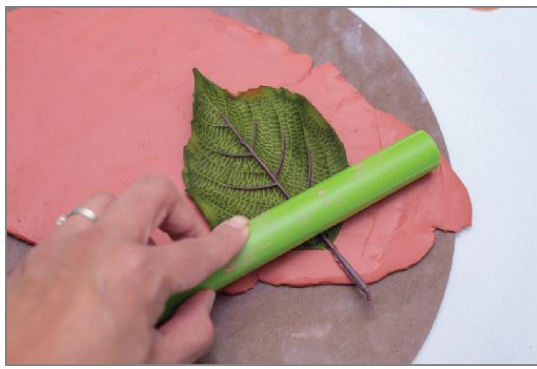
- Air dry clay
- ¼-inch wood slats
- Leaf
- Mini rolling pin
- Skewer or clay tool
- Paint
- Shellac



Wedge a handful of clay to release the air pockets.



Lay down the ¼-inch wood slats about 6 inches apart. Place the clay in between the slats and roll the clay flat. The ¼-inch slats will keep the clay evenly thick.



Lay the leaf down onto the clay. Roll over the leaf with the mini rolling pin.



Use a skewer or clay tool to cut around the leaf impression in the clay.



Lay the clay on top of a rounded form to dry. I used large seashells.



The clay should dry in about 24 hours. Once dried, paint the leaf. Apply a coat of shellac to the top and underside of the leaf.



Place your toad house in a shady part of your garden.

Solitary Bee House

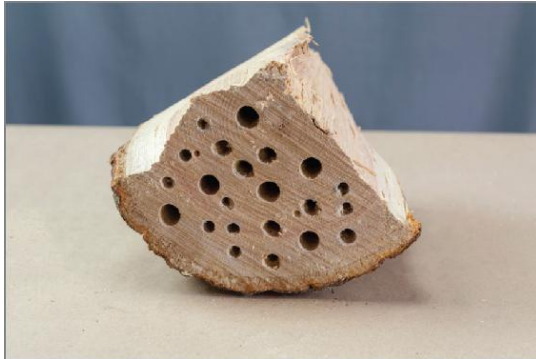


Most people are familiar with honeybees, but there are nearly 20,000 species of bees. Nearly ninety percent of these bees are solitary—meaning they are not social and do not live in colonies. However, one thing all bees share in common is that they are essential pollinators and their population is on a decline. One way to help out these solitary bees is to make them a safe place to burrow and lay their eggs.



Supplies

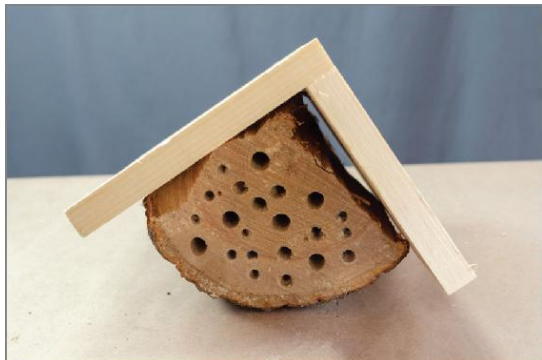
- Split log (at least 8 inches long)
- Drill with various bit sizes
- Pine board (or cedar)
- Framing nails
- Paint
- Finishing nails
- Hammer
- Saw



Solitary bees vary considerably in size, appearance, and where they choose to nest. Having a variety of hole depths and widths will attract several species of bees. The depth of the holes can be between 5 to 6 inches for holes $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter. For holes $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to $\frac{3}{16}$ inch in diameter, the depth of the holes can be between 3 to 5 inches in depth. Drill a variety of holes in the log.



The log now needs a roof on it to help shelter the bees from inclement weather. Cut two boards the same length and roughly the same width of the log. Pre-nail along the side of one board with finishing nails. Then nail the board to its twin.



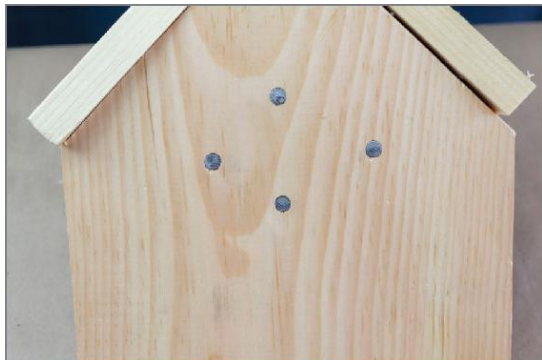
Check the fit by putting it on top of the split log.



Also check to make sure the roof lines up to the back of the log.



Cut another board at least twice the size of the log. Line the roof up at one end and mark in the peak of the roof. Then, cut off the ends to match the roof peak. Paint the boards (not necessary if you used cedar).



Nail the roof onto the back brace board with framing nails. Then, nail the back of the brace board into the back of the log with framing nails.

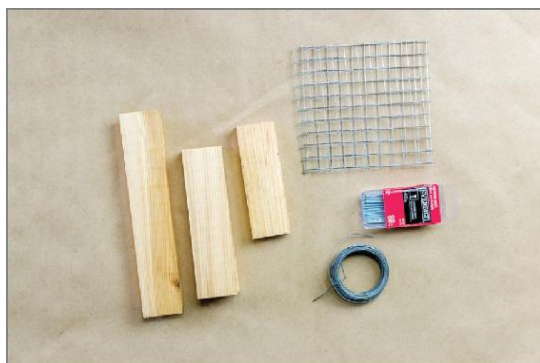


You can also set the log into a box. The box will need to be deep enough to hold the log with at least an inch of overhang. Fill in the space around the box with pine cones, twigs, leaves, and small cardboard tubes. Hang your bee house in your garden so that the bees can get plenty of food and pollinate your plants. You'll be amazed to see how many types of solitary bees will check in to your cozy critter inn.

Hanging Suet Feeder

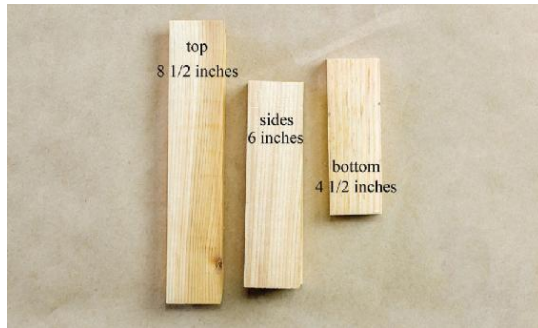


Several birds benefit from the added calories in suet year-round. Suet helps meets the increased energy demands of nesting birds in the spring. In the summer, it provides a good substitute for insect-eating birds. In fall, it helps birds store fat to prepare for migration or the coming winter. And in winter, it replenishes depleted stores of energy and nutrients, helping birds survive the cold months. A suet feeder is a great addition to a garden or landscape that will help attract more bird varieties.



Supplies

- 1 by 2-inch pine board
- Wood glue
- Paint
- Finishing nails
- Staple gun and staples
- ¼-inch hardware cloth
- Drill
- Two ½-inch wood screws
- 18-gauge galvanized wire

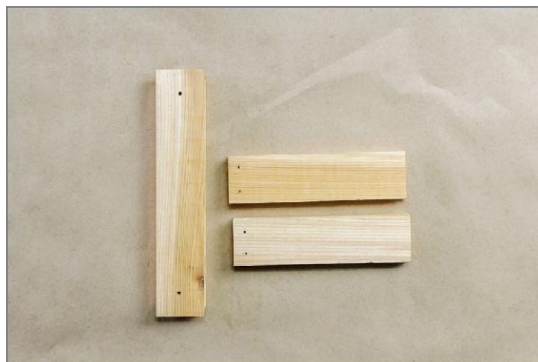


Cut List

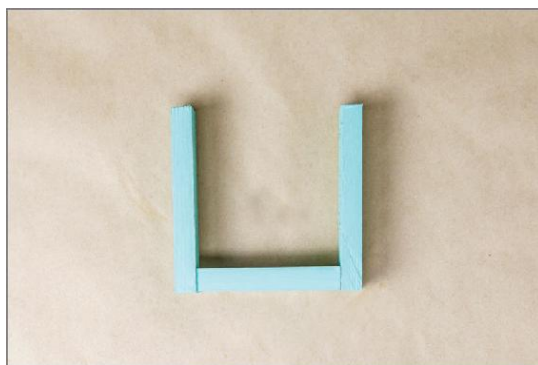
- Top: 8½ inches
- Sides: 6 inches (2)
- Bottom: 4½ inches
- Hardware cloth: 5 by 5 inches



Cut the ends of the top piece at a 45-degree angle.



Pre-drill holes in top and side pieces. Paint the pieces.



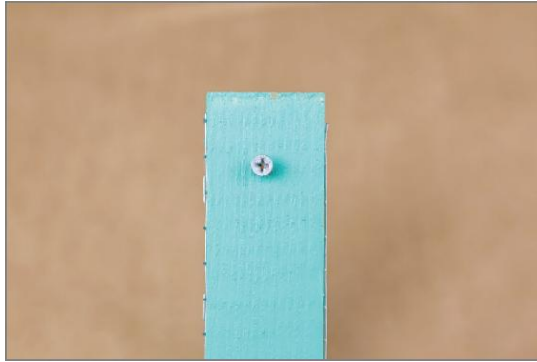
Make sure the ends with the pre-drilled holes are lined up with the bottom piece. Glue the bottom and the side pieces together.



Once the glue sets, nail the sides to the bottom piece.



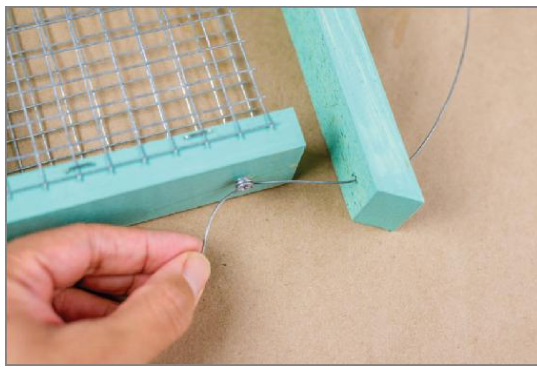
Staple the hardware cloth on both sides of the base.



Drill the wood screws into the sides of the base 1 inch down from the top.



Cut a 12-inch length of galvanized wire. Thread it through the top piece that is still detached. Make sure that the wire is even on both ends.



Wrap the ends of the wire around the screws on the side of the feeder a few times.



Hang the suet feeder near your other bird feeders. Insect eaters like woodpeckers, chickadees, wrens, and mockingbirds love suet.

Recycled Hummingbird Feeder



The average hummingbird is 1 inch long and weighs around 2 grams.

Depending on the species, they can beat their wings from 720 to 5400 times per minute when hovering. A hummingbird's wing beats take up so much energy that on an average day, a hummingbird will consume double its body weight. Although they prefer to drink nectar from flowers, supplementing their food is encouraged during the spring and fall when they are preparing for migration. This feeder is made from materials I found in my recycle bin.



Supplies

- Glass bottle with lid (the bottle needs to have a neck)
- 2 aluminum soda cans
- Markers
- Drill with $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch drill bit
- Five-minute two-part epoxy
- Toothpicks
- Scissors
- Red and yellow spray paint
- Awl or hole puncher
- 18-gauge wire
- Work gloves
- Ant moat



Mark a dot in the center of the bottom of one soda can and the center of the bottle's lid while it is still on the bottle. Drill a hole in the marked spot with a $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch drill bit. It's easier and safer to drill the hole while the can is intact and the lid is still on the bottle.



Measure $\frac{1}{2}$ inch down from the bottom rim of the soda can. Mark a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch circumference around the can. Repeat with the other can.



Cut out the bottom of the cans following the ½-inch circumference line.



You should have one can bottom with the drilled out hole and one without.



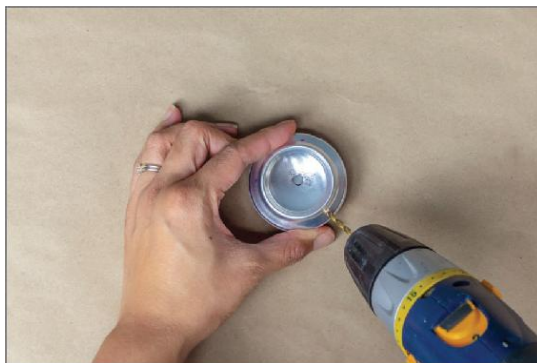
Cut a slit up one side of one of the cans.



With a pair of work gloves on, slightly press in the slit area and insert that can bottom into the other can bottom.



Mark three evenly spaced dots just below the raised ridge area of the can where the center hole was drilled out. This is where the hummingbirds will get access to the nectar.



Drill out the holes with the $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch bit. Be sure to only go through the top can and not all the way through to the bottom.



Cut out a piece of aluminum from one of the cans and draw three 1-inch flowers and cut them out. Set aside.



Mix up a tablespoon of two-part epoxy according to package instructions.



Using a toothpick, spread the epoxy on the can bottoms at the joints. Be sure to fill in any gaps at the joint with the epoxy.



Place some more epoxy resin on the bottle top and set it over the hole of the can base. Be sure to line up the holes. Let the epoxy resin set, then paint the base red or yellow. Paint the flowers you cut out of the aluminum as well. Let both items dry thoroughly.



Punch a hole in the center of each aluminum flower with an awl or a 1/8-inch hole puncher.



Mix up another tablespoon of epoxy resin. Glue the flowers over the holes on the base. Insert a toothpick through the hole in the flower and base to help keep it in place until the resin sets.



To make a hanger for the feeder, cut a length of 18-gauge wire about 18 inches long and another piece about 6 inches long. Make a loop at each end of the 18-inch piece and bend the wire to form a “U”. Wrap the 6-inch piece around the neck of the bottle and insert the ends through the loops of the longer wire and back around the bottle’s neck. Twist the ends to secure.



Mix another tablespoon of epoxy resin. Invert the wire handle so that it is parallel to the bottle. Glue the sides of the wires to the glass bottle with the resin. Place masking tape above and below the glued area to help hold the wire in place while it sets.



Fill the bottle with hummingbird food and screw on the base. Clip an ant moat to the top of the hanger. Hang on a hook and enjoy.

Bird and Bee Bath



Water is essential to all living creatures. Providing a safe and clean water source in your garden will help attract birds, bees, and other pollinators to your garden. It's always fun to add a bit of architectural interest to a garden in the form of a bird and bee bath.



Supplies

- Metal lamp
- Shallow pan or bowl

- Spray paint
- Five-minute epoxy resin
- Pennies
- Scrap wood



I found a metal lamp and metal pan at my local thrift store. Any type of lamp will work as long as it's tall and not made out of glass. Remove the bulb and shade from the lamp and cut the electrical cord. Spray paint the lamp.



The top of the lamp I used needed more surface area in order to glue the shallow dish on top. I cut out a circle of a piece of scrap wood the same diameter of the bulb holder. I secured it into the bulb holder with epoxy. The surface area will vary depending on the lamp you find.



Mix up the epoxy resin according to package instructions. Apply a generous layer onto the wood surface. Place the shallow tray or bowl on top, making sure that it is centered. Let the epoxy set.



Add a few pennies to the basin to inhibit mold growth before you add water.



Fill the basin with a couple inches of water. If you want to primarily use it as a bee bath, add a few rocks to the basin so the bees have a place to perch.



Place the bath in your garden near a bird feeder or bug hotel.

Hearing a bird slam into a window is heartbreaking. When birds look at a window, they see the reflection of sky or trees instead of a pane of glass and think they have a clear flight path. One way to prevent this is to disrupt the reflection. This easy-to-make sun catcher wind chime combination does the trick.



Supplies

- Small metal pie pan or metal lid

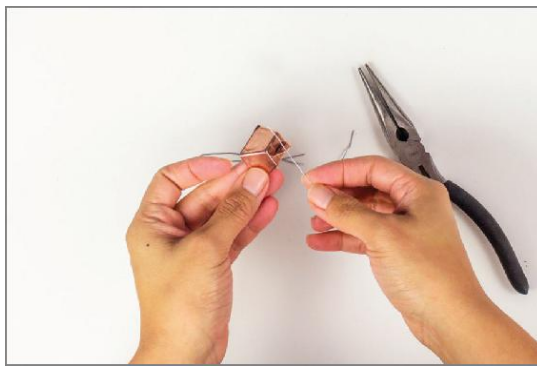
- Marker
- Fishing line
- 16-gauge galvanized wire
- 2-pound fishing swivel
- Awl
- Hammer
- Paint
- Wire cutters
- Mini cow bells
- Needle nose pliers
- Beads
- Scrap wood



Mark the center of the mini pie pan, then mark four evenly spaced points around the edge of the pan.



Use the awl and hammer to pierce a hole through the marked points. Paint the pan and let it dry.



Cut a 4-inch length of wire and thread one end through a cow bell.



Use the needle nose plies to form a loop to secure the wire to the bell.



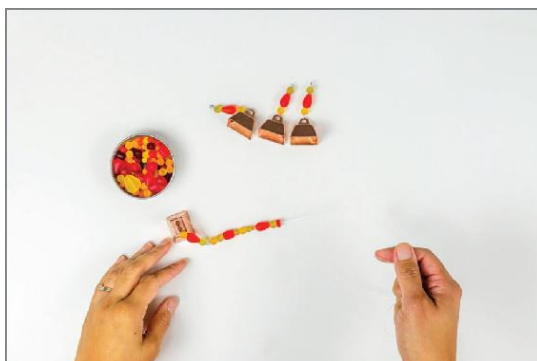
Place two or three beads on the wire. Form a loop after the last bead to secure them in place. Repeat with the four remaining cow bells.



Cut five, 18-inch lengths of fishing line.



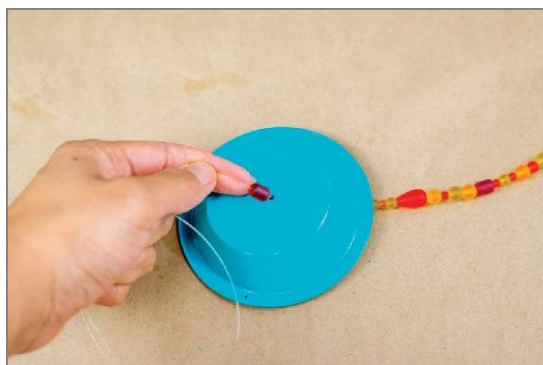
Thread beads onto the line.



You will want the four strings of beads to be a foot long and one to be 14 inches long. The longer strand will go in the center of the chime.



Insert the longest strand's end through the center hole of the mini pie pan.



Thread a bead onto the tail of the fishing line and let it sit flush with the hole at the center of the pie pan. Tie a knot to secure the strand and top bead in place.



Add the side strands in the same manner. Gather all the excess fishing lines at the top of the chime and tie them together. Then, make a loop and tie an overhand knot. Slip the loop onto fishing swivel and hang it outside in front of a window.





Chapter 4



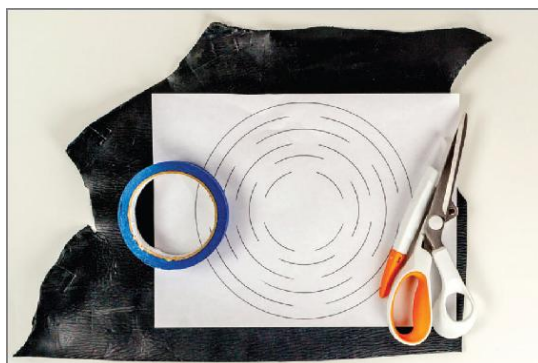
Unique Planters

I love to display plants in unique ways in my garden. Plants in containers offer the flexibility that an in-ground garden cannot. I can move my plants wherever I want and rearrange them or hang them on a whim. When space is at a premium, going vertical will let you get more plants in an otherwise tight space. With a little imagination, you can fashion a planter out of almost anything.

Kirigami Leather Plant Hanger



Kirigami is the Japanese art of cutting and folding paper into objects or designs. It's related to origami, but with more dimension. In the case of this plant holder, the medium is leather instead of paper. I highly recommend using real leather for this plant hanger because real leather is strong and flexible. Check your local thrift store for leather jackets and bags—they are a great source for crafting leather.



Supplies

- Printed template
- Masking tape
- Leather remnant (at least 8½ by 11 inches)
- Craft knife
- Scissors
- Leather laces
- 3-inch metal ring



Use the QR code below to access and print the template. Tape the template to the back side of the leather remnant. With the craft knife, cut along the inner lines of the template.



Cut around the circumference of the circle.



Gently tug on the leather circle to make sure all your cuts went all the way through.



To transform the leather circle into a basket, you will need two leather laces. The laces need to be twice the size of the desired length of the planter. For example, I want my planter to be 18 inches long, so I will need two laces that are 36 inches each.



Insert both leather laces through the metal ring. Make sure the laces are the same length on each side of the ring.



Tie a double knot at each of the outer four slits at the rim of the basket. Trim off the excess leather lace.



Place a potted plant in the leather basket and hang. The basket will stretch, revealing an accordion-style array of honeycomb-like shapes. The hanging basket will hold up to an 8-inch pot.

Fabric Pouch Plant Holder



This plant holder makes use of scrap pieces of fabric and leather. Like many crafters, I hold on to any workable remnant of supplies with the intention of using it for another project. After folding the little paper pouches for my custom seed packets, I thought about how those little pouches would be cute as mini flower holders.



Supplies

- Canvas (or heavy duty) fabric

- Measuring tape
- Pinking shears
- Iron
- Sewing machine and accessories
- Leather remnant
- $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch grommets and setter
- Hammer



Cut fabric into a 12 by 12-inch square. If you have a serger, go ahead and serge the edges of canvas. If not, use pinking shears on the edges to prevent fraying.



Fold one corner of the square to meet the opposite corner of the square, forming a triangle. Press with iron to set the seam.



Rotate the triangle so that the middle peak of the triangle is facing towards the top. Bring in one side of triangle and fold it to meet the opposite side.



Repeat with the other side. Press with an iron to set the seams. Sew across the two folds. Fold down the outside triangle flap at the top. Press with an iron to keep the flap in place. Now you have a pouch.



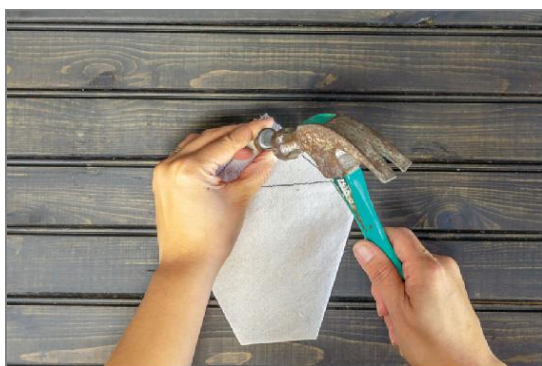
Cut a piece of leather about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch smaller than the triangle at the top of the pouch. Sew the leather triangle in place.



Find the center on the top leather triangle. Place the flat side of the grommet on the spot and trace around the inside of the grommet. Cut out that small circle.



Slide the male end of the grommet through the top side of the hole and place the female end underneath.



Set the grommet with a hammer and grommet setter.



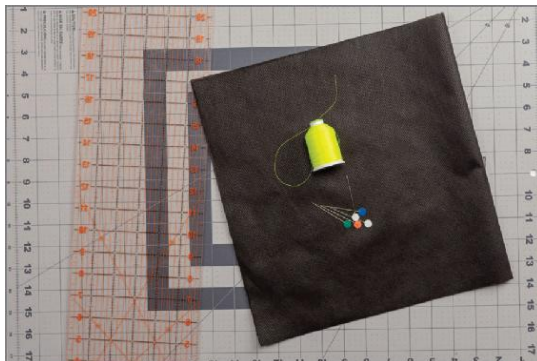
The pouch is ready to hang. The grommet and leather will reinforce the hole, allowing the pouch to hold small potted plants. Hang the planter on a nail or screw that is anchored into a stud or dry wall anchor.

Grow Bag



Sometimes you just lack space for a raised bed or in-ground garden.

Instead of spending a large chunk of change on pots, use grow bags. Grow bags allow air and water to continue to flow and the root systems to breathe, so the plant doesn't become root bound like it would in a pot. Grow bags are commercially available through specialty garden retailers, but you don't need to buy them. They are easy to make with supplies you can get locally.



Supplies

- Weed blocking fabric
- Scissors
- Nylon thread*
- Sewing machine
- Ruler
- Pins

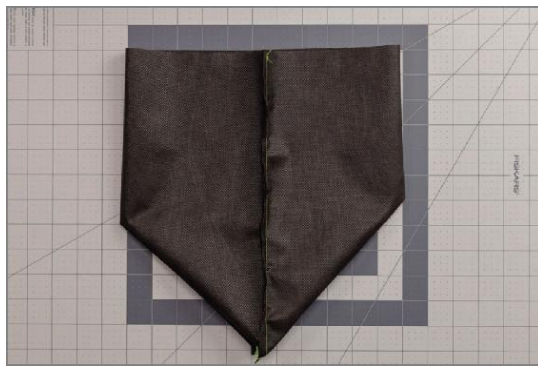
*If you cannot find nylon thread, use a heavy duty upholstery thread. Cotton thread will not hold up to the elements and will break down before the end of a growing season.



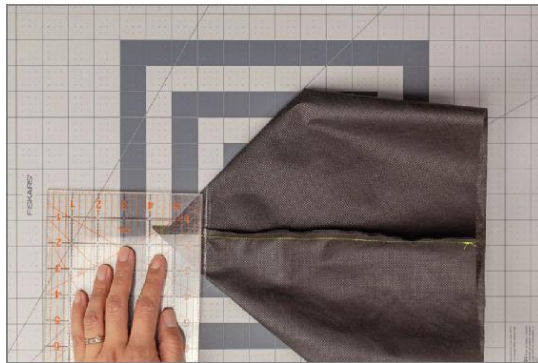
Cut the weed fabric into a 12 by 24-inch rectangle. Fold it in half and pin. This will make a gallon size pot. You can make grow bags larger or smaller depending on the size of the initial rectangle.



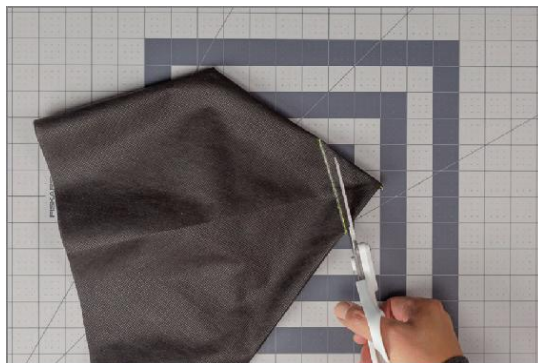
Sew across two of the open sides. This should leave you with an opening on one side.



Open the bag and re-flatten it so the side sewn seam is in the middle of the bag.



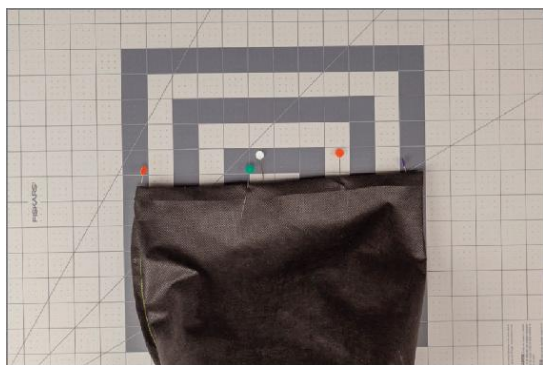
With a ruler, measure up the point 2 inches and mark a straight line across. You will need to do this to both sides of the bag.



Sew across each line. Cut the excess fabric off $\frac{1}{4}$ inch away from the seam.



Open up the bag. You should have a flat bottom.



Fold down the top of the bag $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.



Top stitch around the $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch fold.



Fill the bag with potting soil and plant like normal. Like most containers, grow bags will need to be watered frequently. They will dry out faster than in-ground plants because of the breathable, porous fabric. Check on them often to make sure the soil doesn't get too dry between watering.

Fabric-Covered Terra Cotta Pots



A simple way to dress up a plain terra cotta pot is to cover it with fabric.

Using a specially formulated decoupage glue for the outdoors, you can customize any terra cotta pot with fabric and it will be weatherproof. This project is perfect for using up your fabric scraps and will make a one-of-a-kind gift for any plant lover.



Supplies

- Terra cotta pots

- Tissue paper
- Masking tape
- Pencil
- Mod Podge Outdoor Decoupage Glue
- Scissors
- Fabric



Tape one end of the tissue paper to the terra cotta pot.



Wrap the tissue around the pot until it meets the other side. Tape it down.



Trace around the lower end of the rim of the pot.



Trace around the bottom edge of the pot.



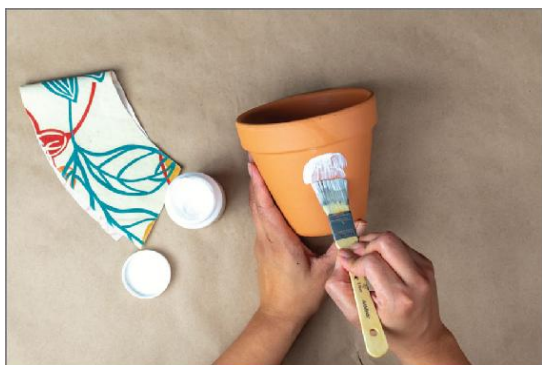
Remove the tape and the tissue paper from the pot. Cut out the template you just traced.



Wrap the template around the pot to check the fit. Trim if necessary.



Lay the template on top of the fabric, trace, and then cut it out.



Apply a generous layer of decoupage glue on one side of the pot.



Place the center of the fabric on the glue. Position the fabric so that it lines up with the bottom lip of the rim. Then, smooth it down onto the surface of the pot.



Apply decoupage glue onto the section of pot adjacent to where you just glued. Position the next section of fabric onto the glue and smooth it down. Continue around the pot.



Add a generous coat of decoupage glue all over the outside of the fabric. This will seal the fabric and make it weatherproof. Let it dry. It will take 24 hours to fully cure.



Once it's fully dry, add soil and a plant. Gift your pretty pot to a fellow plant lover.

Geometric Plant Stand



I love the clean look of geometric lines, especially hexagons. I designed this plant stand using scrap wood and an unexpected piece of hardware I found in the plumbing supply aisle at the hardware store. When I first spied the copper hooks in the plumbing section, they looked like those fancy hair pin legs you can get to add to tables, but for a lot less money. The copper wire hooks are designed to hold pipes, but they also make excellent legs for a small plant stand.



Supplies

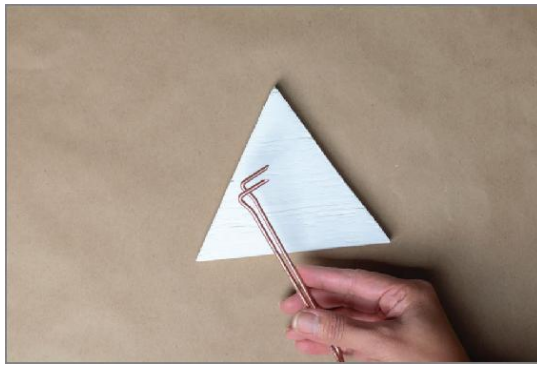
- Paper
- Scissors
- Scrap wood
- Jigsaw
- Paint
- Three $\frac{3}{4}$ by 6-inch CPR wire hooks
- Wood glue
- Hammer



I used a 12 by 12-inch piece of scrap paper and drew a hexagon with 6-inch sides for the top. For the base of the planter, I drew an equilateral triangle with 6-inch sides. Cut out the paper templates and trace them onto the scrap wood.



Use a jigsaw to cut out the pieces. Paint the shapes.



The copper wire hooks have a pointed, sharp end. Position the hook in the center of one of the sides of the triangle.



Hammer a copper wire hook into all three sides of the triangle.



Apply wood glue to the top of the triangle.



Center the triangle base onto the hexagon piece. Let the glue dry overnight.
It's ready for a plant!

Tomato Cage Plant Stand



I'm not a fan of tomato cages. My tomato plants grow way bigger than the cages, so I find them unpractical for my garden. Since my mom gifted me an extra tomato cage, I decided to convert it into something useful—a plant stand! Converting a tomato cage into a plant stand takes less than ten minutes tops.

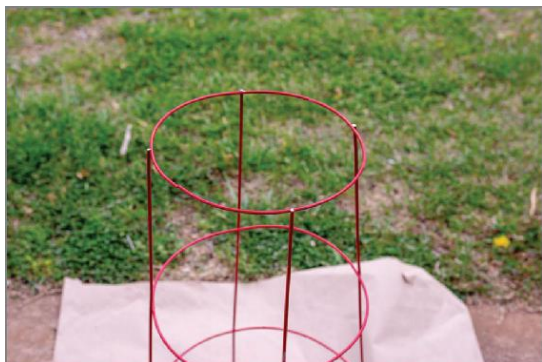


Supplies

- Tomato cage
- Hacksaw or bolt cutters
- Metal file
- Paint (optional)



A tomato cage has three or four different sized circular tiers. Measure the base of the pot you intend to use. Select the tier that is slightly smaller than the pot. With a hack saw or bolt cutter, cut off the part of the cage that goes into the ground.



Use the file to smooth the edges. Spray paint the cage if needed.



Place the pot in the stand to check the fit.



Add a plant and you're done! The plant stand will be top heavy with a plant in it. Make sure to place the stand in an area where it will receive some protection from wind or accidental bumps.

Kokedama Hanging Plant



Kokedama roughly translates to “moss ball.” It is a style of Japanese bonsai where a plant’s root system is wrapped in moss and bound with string. The plant becomes a sculptural art form, suspended in air. Kokedama is a fun and unique way to display house plants. They are great conversation starters and will add an attractive art element to your home.



Supplies

- Bonsai soil

- Peat moss
- A small plant
- Sheet moss
- Scissors
- Twine
- Water
- S hook



Mix together 70 percent bonsai soil and 30 percent peat. Remove the plant from its pot.



Gently remove the soil from around the plant's roots.



Add some water to the soil mix until it resembles the consistency of oatmeal. The mixture is correct when you can form a ball that holds its shape. Pack the soil around the plant's roots, making the ball about the size of a softball. Set the plant aside.



Soak the sheet moss in a bowl of water until the moss is completely hydrated.



Remove the moss from the water and give it a light squeeze. Open up the moss and lay it flat. Place the soil ball in the middle of the sheet moss.



Wrap the moss around the soil ball.



Tie twine around the top of the ball to secure the moss in place.



Wrap the twine all around the ball.

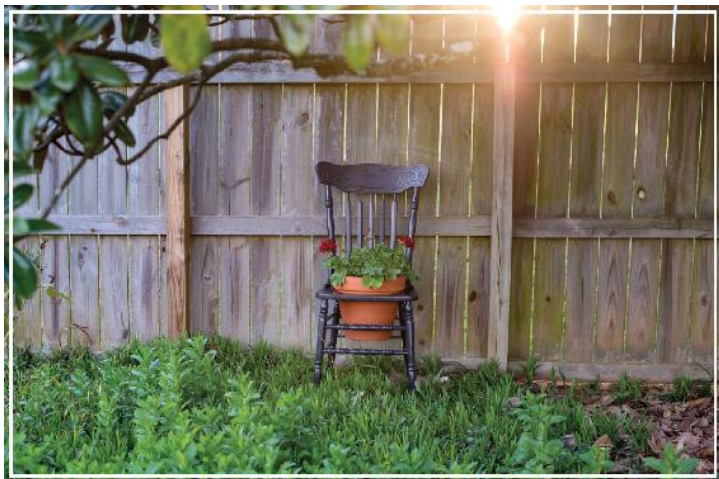


Tie an overhand knot to secure the twine in place.



To hang, tie a length of twine onto the sides of the ball to form a loop. Use an S hook to hang the plant. To water the kokedama plant, soak the entire ball in a bowl of water until the soil is completely hydrated, then drain.

Upcycled Chair Planter



I spotted this old chair at a garage sale. It was still in good condition, but needed a new coat of paint. I had no intention of using it as a chair for sitting. Nope, I envisioned this thrift store find to become a new planter for my garden.



Supplies

- Measuring tape
- Pot

- Wooden chair
- Scrap piece of wood
- Finishing nails
- Hammer
- Marker
- Jigsaw
- Sandpaper
- Paint



Measure the diameter of the pot you intend to use. Cut a piece scrap wood that is half the diameter (the radius). Nail two finishing nails at each end of the scrap wood. Find the center of the chair's seat and mark it.



Nail one end of the scrap wood into the center of the chair on the marked spot.



Pivot the wood around in a circle, allowing the nail to score the wood.



Drill a hole large enough to fit the jigsaw blade on the inner edge of the circle.



Insert the jigsaw blade into the hole and cut out the circle in the seat. Sand the edges and paint the chair. Add a coat of shellac or polyurethane if you plan to put the planter outdoors.



Place a potted plant into the hole and, voila, you have new planter. Place the planter in your flower bed to add a whimsical element to the space.







Chapter 5



Nature Crafts

The outdoors is full of crafting goodness. Plants are an excellent source for creating wonderful gifts and décor. I source many of my craft supplies right in my backyard. Flowers, herbs, twigs, rocks—they can all be transformed into something interesting. The next time you are on a hike or walk, take a look around. You never know what you can create with Mother Nature.

Flower Press



Flower pressing was a practical way for early botanists to preserve and transfer plant specimens from the wild for later cataloging and analyzing. The practice is still in use with amateur botanists and plant enthusiasts. Whether you want to preserve a sample of an interesting plant you found on a walk, or a garden favorite, a basic flower press is a cinch to make.



Supplies

- Plywood (2 identical pieces cut down to the size press you

desire)

- Paint (optional)
- Measuring tape
- Marker
- Drill with 1/4-inch drill bit
- Four 1/4- by 6-inch carriage bolts
- Thick cardboard
- Watercolor paper
- Four 1/4-inch wingnuts
- Four 1/4-inch washers
- Craft knife



Paint the boards (optional). Measure 1 inch from top and side of each corner and make a mark.



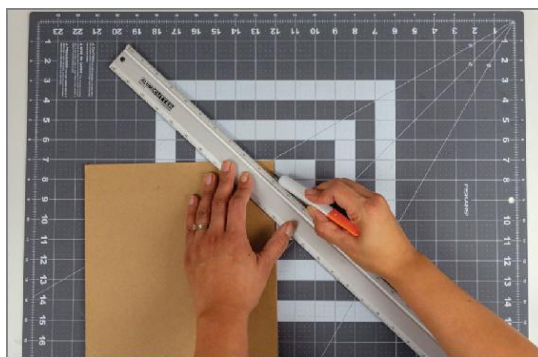
Drill out each mark.



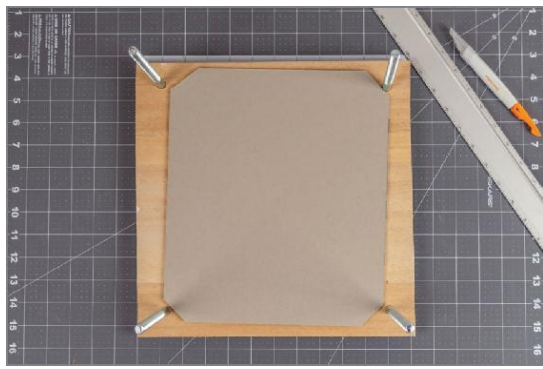
Thread the carriage bolts through all four holes in one of the boards. Set aside.



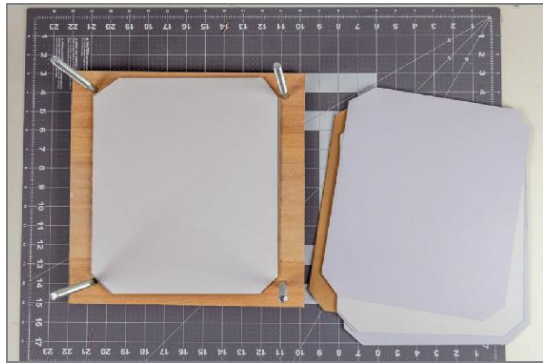
Cut down two pieces of cardboard so that they will fit between the bolts in your flower press.



Take off the corners of the cardboard at a 45-degree angle. Do the same thing for several sheets of the watercolor paper.



The cardboard should fit in the middle of the press without hitting the four bolts.



Place one of the cardboard pieces on the bottom of the press. The watercolor paper will rest in the middle and another cardboard piece on top.



Thread the other half of the press on top of the papers and slip the washers over each bolt and a wingnut. To tighten the press, twist the wingnuts down until you cannot twist anymore. The watercolor paper will help absorb moisture from the plants, resulting in a prettier, neater pressing.

Fire Starters



Fire starters make wonderful housewarming gifts. You can make them with dried herbs, citrus, and spices. They release an intoxicating fragrance when ignited and will aid in starting a wood fire. They are perfect to take on a camping trip and pretty enough to display in a jar by your fireplace.



Supplies

- Cupcake pan
- Paper cupcake liners

- Dryer lint
- Cedar shavings
- Dried spices (cinnamon, cloves, bay leaves)
- Small pine cones
- Dried pine needles
- Paraffin wax (from old candles)
- Heatproof dish
- Cotton twine



Line a cupcake pan with the paper cupcake liners.



Fill each liner with some dryer lint and cedar shavings.



Add in the spices, pine cones, and pine needles.



Melt the paraffin wax in a heatproof dish. Pour the wax in each liner to almost full. Let cool.



Once cooled, tie a length of the cotton twine around each “cupcake.”



Store the fire starters in a jar until needed. To use, place each fire starter in kindling. Light with a match. The spices, cedar shavings, and dryer lint will catch fire and the wax will extend the burn, giving the kindling time to catch fire and emit a pleasing scent.

Natural Dyeing



For thousands of years, dyes were created from natural materials.

Nowadays, dyeing with natural materials is done primarily by hobbyists. Still, the range of colors you can get from common plants never ceases to amaze me. Natural dyeing is not an exact science; results can differ from dye bath to dye bath depending on many variables. Nonetheless, I encourage you to give natural dyeing a try. One of the easiest and most readily available plants to dye with is goldenrod.



Supplies

- 100 grams of 100% wool yarn*
- 100 grams of goldenrod**

- Large bowl
- Dish soap
- 1 rounded tablespoon + 1 teaspoon of aluminum sulfate
- 1¼ teaspoons cream of tartar
- A container in which to dissolve the aluminum sulfate
- A large stainless steel dye pot (cannot be used for food)
- Thermometer with a clip (a candy thermometer will work)
- Strainer

*Protein fibers like wool work best for natural dyes. Synthetic fibers will not soak up natural dyes.

**Goldenrod is a perennial that blooms late summer into fall. It is a beautiful wildflower that grows in open meadows and roadsides. It is also an amazing dye plant that yields—you guessed it—a golden yellow. For an effective dye bath, you will need a 1:1 weight ratio of fresh flowers to fiber.



The fiber needs to be prepped before the dyeing process. Fill a bowl with warm water and add a tad of dish soap. Place the bowl in the soapy water and leave to soak for 2 hours or overnight. This process is called scouring. It will remove oils from the fiber so that it will better absorb the dye.



Rinse the fiber in tepid water and drain. Meanwhile, prepare the mordant bath.



The mordanting process prepares the fibers to bond with natural dyes. This is done before the immersion into the dye bath. Pour the alum (aluminum sulfate) into a container. Bring about a cup of water to a boil and pour it into the container to dissolve the alum. Dissolve the cream of tartar in a separate bowl in the same manner.



Fill a dye pot with room temperature water. Place on a heat source, then add the dissolved aluminum sulfate and cream of tartar to the pot and stir well. Add the fiber to the pot. Slowly bring the temperature up to 180°F and hold for 45 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare the dye bath.



Remove the flowers from the goldenrod and place in a large pot. Add enough

water to cover the flowers by an inch or so. Boil for 20 minutes to extract the dye. Strain to create the dye bath.



Remove the yarn from the mordant bath. Add the extracted dye solution back into a large pot and place the yarn into the dye bath. Add enough water to the dye solution so the yarn can move freely in the dye bath. Heat the dye bath to 180 to 200°F. Heat for one hour or until the yarn reaches the color desired. Turn off the heat and let the fiber cool in the dye bath.



Once the fiber has cooled, remove it from the dye bath and gently squeeze. Hang the yarn to dry.



This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to natural dyes. You can

achieve a wide color range with goldenrod with iron and acidic after baths and over dyes. However, that process can fill up another book. Play around with other plants in your garden to see which will make good dye plants. Some other known cultivated dye plants include: marigold, coreopsis, green walnuts, sunflowers, and black-eyed Susan.

Seed Bombs



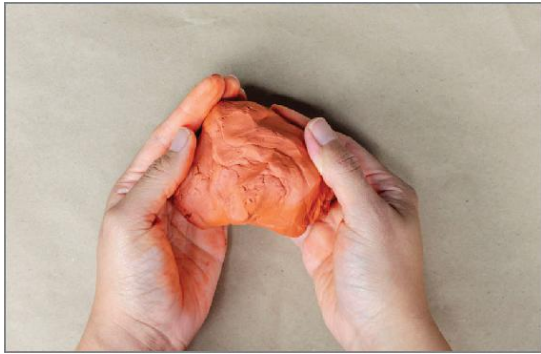
A seed bomb is a way to spread beauty in areas that need a little extra help in the aesthetics department; plus, the flowers will benefit your bee population. Although it's considered a common weapon in guerilla gardening, seed bombs do not have to be part of a clandestine ploy to plant seeds on public property. Seed bombs make great party favors for weddings, bridal showers, and birthdays. They are a perfect way to gift your love of gardening to others.



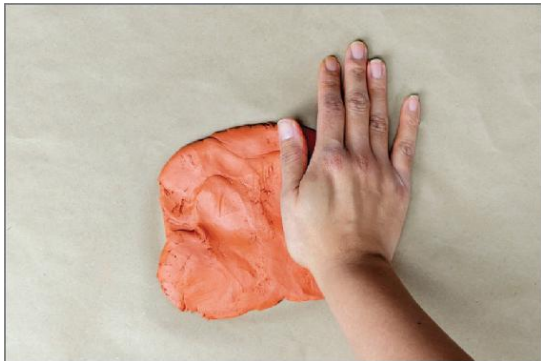
Supplies

- Natural clay
- Wildflower seed mix*
- Seed starting mix

*Select wildflowers that are native to your area.



Take a handful of clay.



Flatten clay into a sheet with your palm.



Sprinkle seed starting mix or compost and wildflower seeds in center of clay.



Knead until everything is mixed in and seeds and soil are well distributed.



Pinch off a section of clay and roll it into a thin coil.



Pinch off 1/2-inch sections and roll into balls.



Place on a tray or newspaper to dry and harden. Wrap the seed bombs in a piece of fabric or in a small organza bag for gift giving. To use the seed bombs, toss them into a field or any place you'd like wildflowers to grow. The clay will protect the seeds from birds and other seed eaters so they will have a chance to germinate.

Botanical Impression Magnets



The refrigerator in my house is covered with reminders and kids' art projects. Finding an available magnet is always a challenge. Luckily, I like to make my own custom magnets with a botanical flair. Using polymer clay and fresh leaves from the yard, you can create attractive magnets that may get more attention than the paper it's holding.



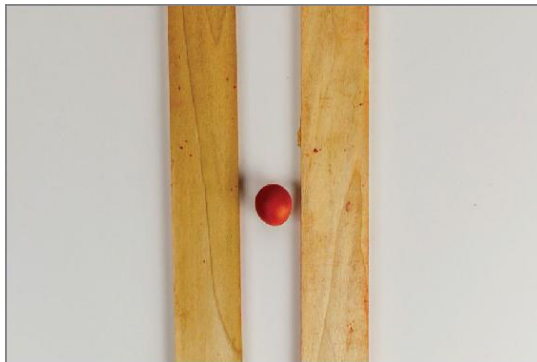
Supplies

- Polymer clay in terra cotta

- Two ¼-inch wood slats
- Mini rolling pin
- Fern or any fresh leaf
- Acrylic paint
- Strong magnets
- E6000 glue



Pinch off a 1-inch piece of polymer clay and knead it until it softens. Roll it into a ball.



Place the ball of clay between the ¼-inch slats.



Roll the ball flat. It should now be an oval with an even $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch thickness.



Place the fern or leaf over the clay oval.



Use the roller to carefully press the leaf into the clay. Do not press too hard—you don't want to flatten out the clay very much.



Gently lift the leaf, revealing the impression. Bake the polymer clay in the oven according to package directions. Let it cool and harden.



Paint in the impression area and let it dry. Glue the magnet to the back. The E6000 glue will need to cure for twenty-four hours to ensure a permanent bond.



Your new magnets are ready for display.

Anthotype Photogram



An anthotype is an image created using photosensitive material from plants. An emulsion is made from plant material and spread onto paper to create photo paper. The paper can then be exposed to light with a positive over it to create a photograph. In this project, I am creating a photogram, not a photograph. A photogram is an image made by placing objects directly onto the surface of photographic paper and then exposing it to light. Spinach is a highly light sensitive plant and it is a good one to use when getting started with anthotype photograms.



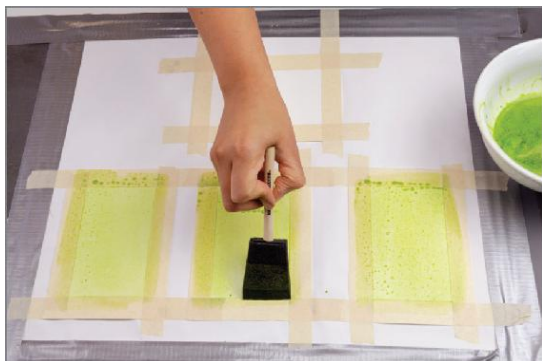
Supplies

- Handful of fresh spinach
- Blender
- Vodka*
- Fine mesh strainer
- Brush
- Watercolor paper
- Leaf, flower, fern, or other plant material
- Glass from a picture frame
- Ceramic bowl for mixing ingredients

*Any clear, food grade alcohol will do. You can use denatured alcohol, but I do not recommend putting that alcohol in a blender you use for food.



Place the fresh spinach in a blender. Add a tablespoon of vodka. Pulse the spinach until it's smooth and the consistency of soup. Pour the spinach slurry through the fine mesh strainer into a ceramic bowl. The spinach emulsion is ready.



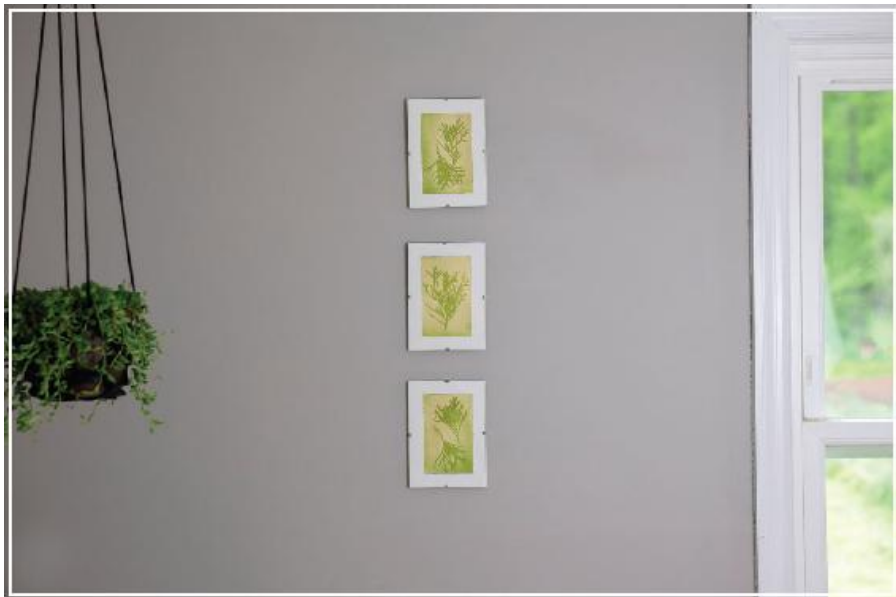
Brush three layers of the spinach emulsion onto the watercolor paper, letting the paper dry between layers.



Once the third layer is dried, position your leaves, flower, or whatever plant material on the paper.



Place the glass on top of the paper. Place in a bright, sunny spot. It will take about two to four hours for the prints to fully expose. You will notice that the spinach emulsion will begin to lighten around the plant material. Once the exposure reaches the color you like, remove the glass and plant material.



Place the prints in a frame and hang in an area out of direct sunlight. The photograms will fade with time, but they will add a lovely, natural accent to your home.

Plant Pounding



Plant pounding is a method to extract natural dyes from flowers or any plant. It is a form of natural dyeing that will leave a color impression of the plant on a piece of paper or fabric. This is a fun project to do with children or anyone who loves instant gratification. Many types of plants will extract some sort of color. Take a walk and select a variety of plants with different colors and shapes. It's fun to experiment to see what each plant will produce.

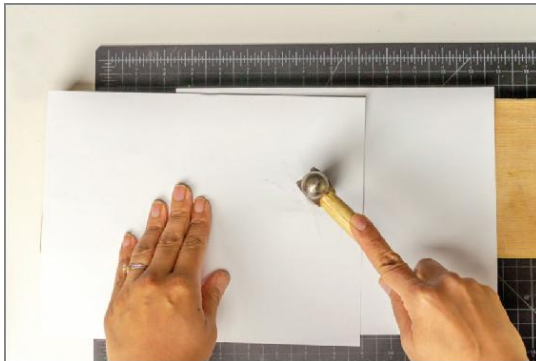


Supplies

- Watercolor or sketch paper
- Flowers or leaves
- Hammer with a flat metal head
- Hard surface



Some plants make better impressions on watercolor paper than sketch paper and vice versa. In general, juicier plants, like pansies, will work better on a more absorbent surface like watercolor paper or fabric. Place the paper onto a hard surface. Lay the plant material on the paper. In the case of this Japanese maple leaf, the stem/vein side leaves a darker impression.



Lay another sheet of paper on top of the plant. Gently tap the leaf through the paper. You will notice that some of the plant's juices will bleed through the top paper.

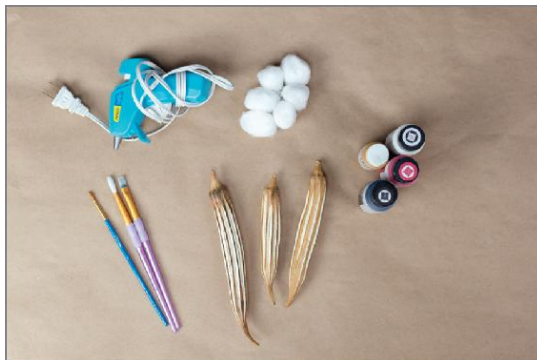


Remove the top sheet and remove the leaf. If the plant was particularly juicy, you may have to scrape the plant off the paper. Experiment with several types of flowers and leaves. The paper is perfect to use for handmade cards or stationary.

Okra Pod Santa



I'm not a fan of eating okra. Well, I will partake in a bite or two of fried okra, and an occasional pickled okra in a bloody Mary. I do, however, love growing okra. They are a beautiful plant with large hibiscus-like flowers and funny looking pods that seem to grow inches overnight. Okra pods are a fun crafting medium once they are dried. You can use the pods to make wreaths, put them in floral arrangements, and make Christmas ornaments.



Supplies

- Dried okra pods
- Paint
- Awl
- Twine
- Hot glue
- Cotton balls



The stem of the pod will be the top. Begin by painting the face of your Santa. Only paint on one side and the face can take up to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the length of the pod. Let it dry.



Use white paint to color in Santa's hair. Paint the back top half of the pod and around the face.



Paint the rest of the pod red for Santa's suit.



Paint the top of the pod red too. This will be Santa's hat. Let it dry. Then, paint in a face for Santa.



Use an awl to make a hole through the stem of the okra pod.



Insert a piece of twine through the stem and tie the ends. Roll a small piece of cotton ball into a coil and glue it around the base of the stem.



Take another piece of cotton and roll it into a small ball. Glue that on top of the stem. Roll a small piece of cotton into a coil and glue it around the mouth to create a beard and mustache.



Your Santa is ready to hang. Try making little angels, elves, or just paint them solid. However you craft with okra pods, they add a fun and unique natural element to your Christmas tree.

Recycled Petal Paper



A great way to recycle paper is to turn it into handmade botanical paper.

The process is simple and it makes use of paper that would otherwise end up in the recycle bin. Handmade paper makes beautiful gift tags, cards, and stationary. Infuse the paper with homegrown dried flowers to add a personal touch and add beauty.



Supplies

- Scrap papers and/or junk mail

- Water
- Kitchen blender (one that will not be used for food)
- Plastic storage tub
- Dried flowers
- Mould and deckle*
- Sponge
- Towels or other absorbent material (like a chamois cloth or Pellon interfacing)

*You can purchase a mould and deckle or make one yourself. Paperslurry.com has a fantastic tutorial to fabricate one using old frames.



Shred or cut up the paper into 1-inch squares or smaller. Soak the paper in water for a few hours or overnight. Fill the blender with water to just about the maximum fill line. Place a handful or two of the soaked paper into the blender. Blend the paper until it's a pulpy slurry.



Fill the storage tub about halfway with water. Pour the slurry into the tub.



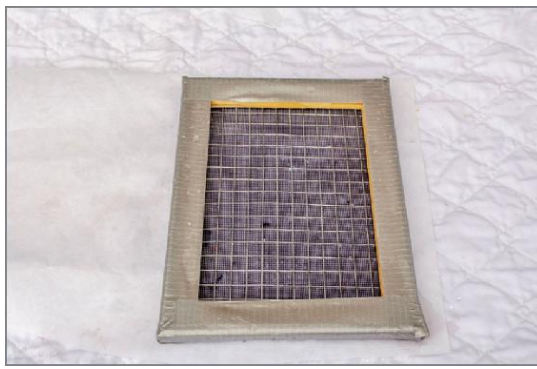
Sprinkle a few petals into the tub.



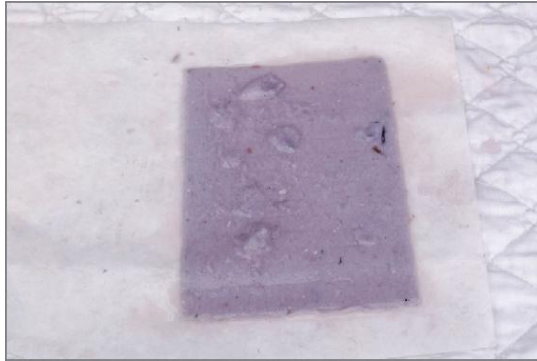
Stir the water in the tub to distribute the pulp. Hold the mould screen-side up and place the deckle on top. Hold them together and dip the mould and deckle into the tub at a 45-degree angle. Dip to the bottom of the tub and slowly scoop up, keeping the mould and deckle horizontal.



As you lift it out of the slurry, shake the mould and deckle back and forth and left to right to make a uniform sheet. Stop shaking before the sheet is fully drained. Let the water drain to a drip.



Remove the deckle and flip the mould onto the absorbent material.



Carefully remove the mould. The paper should release on the absorbent material.



Use the sponge to absorb the excess moisture in the paper. Hang the paper (still stuck to the absorbent material) or lay it in a dry area until the paper is completely dry. Once dried, the paper will peel off easily. Use the paper to make book markers, handmade cards, or gift tags.







Chapter 6



Botanical Décor

Bring the outdoors in. Plants are a wonderful source for home décor. I'm not just talking about putting flowers in a vase. Look beyond the flowers. There is a myriad of greenery, stems, fruit, and vegetables that will add an interesting aesthetic to your home.

Foraged Wreath



A fresh wreath during the holidays is a treat. Unfortunately, they are expensive and usually only feature one type of greenery. The good news is that they are easy to make and you probably have all the materials you need in your backyard.



Supplies

- Evergreen branches
- Pruners

- Floral snips
- Ribbon
- Straw wreath
- Floral “U” Pins
- Pine cones, seed pods, and berries



Gather the greenery. Look for a mixture of color and textures.



Cut a 4-foot length of ribbon. Loop the ribbon through the straw wreath form.



Gather a few sprigs of greenery into a small bundle.



Pin the bundle to the wreath form with a “U” pin.



Make another bundle and pin in below the first bundle in the same direction, but slightly to the left of the first bundle. Continue in this fashion, alternating sides as you place the bundles. When you get back to the first bundle, tuck the end underneath the first bundle, then pin.



Embellish the wreath with a bow, pine cones, or holly berries for a special holiday touch.

Foraged Garland



Who says that garlands are just for the holidays? A garland makes a lovely centerpiece for any occasion. Using seasonal foliage and blooms, you can create a one-of-a-kind garland that showcases the bounty of your garden.



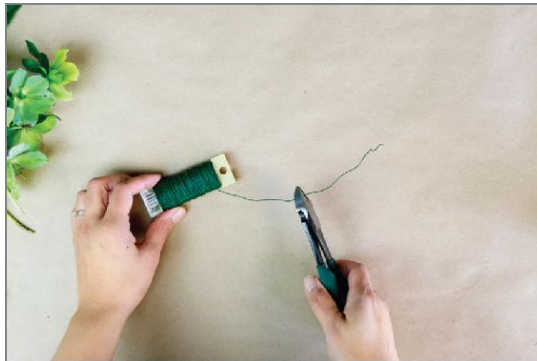
Supplies

- Seasonal greenery and flowers
- Pruners
- Floral paddle wire

- Wire cutters
- Floral snips
- Twine
- Scissors



Gather a mixture of seasonal blooms and greenery. Look for different colors and textures among the greens. Use flowers with woody stems for best results.



Cut a 6-inch length of wire.



Snip a few sprigs of greenery and blooms.



Make a small bundle and secure the stems with the floral wire. Trim the stems so they are even. Make several more bundles.



Lay a plant bundle onto the end of the twine. Take the end of the paddle wire (still attached to the spool) and wrap it around the bundle's stem and twine.



Lay the next bundle slightly below the first on the twine and wrap with wire. Continue this process until you almost reach the desired length of the garland.



When you get to the end of the garland, place the last bundle in the opposite direction of the other bundles. Tuck the stems behind the preceding bundle and wrap it with wire. Trim the excess twine.



Hang your garland or display on a tabletop. A fresh garland centerpiece is perfect for holiday dinners, wedding or baby showers, or a Sunday evening dinner.

Foraged Winter Planter



Even in the middle of winter there are plants available to create a seasonal arrangement. Look for seed pods, various textures of evergreens, berries, and even bare branches. These hardy winter plants will last for weeks in an outdoor planter.



Supplies

- Floral foam
- Container or pot

- Serrated knife
- Floral snips
- Evergreen branches, leaves, berries, and seed pods



Place the floral foam inside your container and cut it down to size. It needs to be level or slightly below the lip of the container.



Use the smaller pieces of floral foam you cut to fill in the sides of the container.



Pour water into the container to soak the foam. It will take a few minutes for the foam to absorb the water. The foam will turn a dark green.



To help the plant go into the foam more smoothly, cut the ends at an angle.



I like to start with a filler foliage. Pick one with full leaves/branches.



Create a base shape with the filler branches.



Add smaller branches in the front and sides. Fill in any holes or gaps with more filler branches.



View your arrangement from different angles to make sure there are not holes or gaps. Fill in as needed. The arrangement will last for weeks as long as the floral foam stays moist.

Branch Weaving



Branch weaving is a craft that is natural, simple, and a great way to make simple decor with foraged supplies. It's also the perfect yarn stash buster!



Supplies

- A branch (get one with a distinctive V shape)
- Pruners
- Embroidery thread
- Yarn

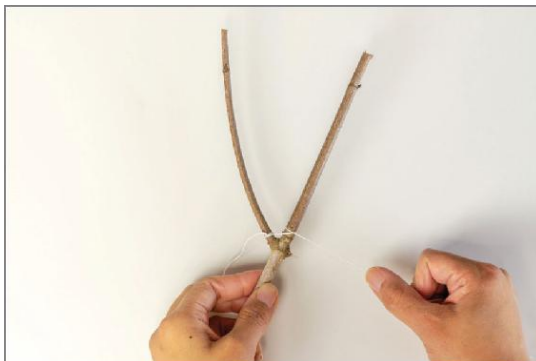
- Scissors
- Tapestry needle



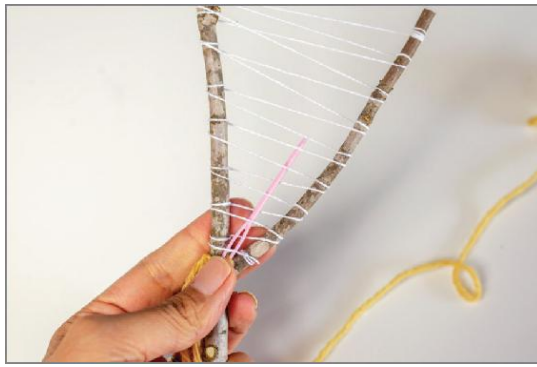
Trim off any extra branches around the V shape of your branch.



Tie a length of embroidery thread onto one side of the V-shaped branch. Secure twice with an overhand knot.



It's time to begin the wrap—the set of lengthwise yarn that is held in tension on your branch loom. Bring the yarn to the opposite side and wrap firmly around the branch twice. Then bring the yarn back to the other side and wrap firmly around the branch twice. Continue to wrap back and forth all the way up the V. Tie a secure overhand knot at the end.



Your loom is ready for weaving. Take a length of yarn at least five times the length of the branch and thread it through the eye of the tapestry needle. The needle will be the shuttle (holds the yarn). Once threaded, start from the bottom and weave the needle in and out of the loom. I like to go under the first thread and then over the next one and so on. Weave the length of yarn through until you reach the top. You can secure the end of the yarn by tying it to one of the V branches.



Continue the under-and-over weaving motion, also known as the weft. After a couple of rows, go ahead and push the woven yarn closer together to eliminate gaps. Once you get the hang of the weaving motion, you can weave through several threads at a time. If you run out of yarn, rethread the tapestry needle and add the new yarn in at the bottom of the loom.

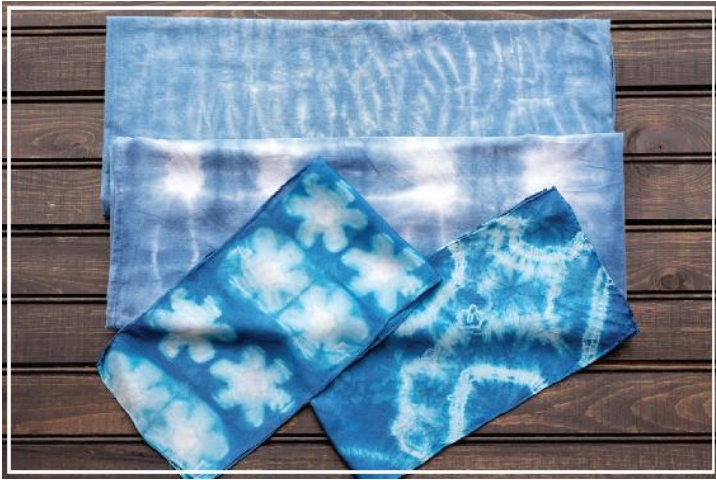


Once you fill up the loom, cut the yarn and leave a 2-inch tail. Weave in the tail by inserting the needle horizontally into the woven stitches. Now that you know how to branch weave, it's time to get super creative. Experiment with different yarn textures and colors, use ribbon or string, etc. Try weaving horizontally or change directions while weaving.



Arrange your creations into a beautiful centerpiece, or hang the branch as wall art.

Shibori Fabric



Shibori is the Japanese art of embellishing fabric with various techniques (usually folding, twisting, or bunching cloth and binding it) before dyeing it in indigo. The bound fabric will resist the dye, resulting in a distinctive blue and white pattern. You can use any type of dye for this project, even natural dye.



Supplies

- Indigo dye kit*
- Natural fiber fabric (like cotton or silk)

- Rubber bands
- Wood shape die cuts
- 2-inch PVC pipe
- Rubber or latex gloves
- Twine
- Large container to mix the dye

*Indigo is a natural dye that produces a deep blue. I highly suggest if you wish to try indigo to purchase a kit. It comes with the premeasured additives that make the indigo work correctly. Indigo works extremely well on cotton fabric, which makes it a great choice for shibori.



Prepare the indigo dye bath per package instructions. This shibori technique is called Itajime, or shape resist. To start, fold the cloth like an accordion. Begin by folding in one side of the fabric. Then, fold it in again in the other direction. Then again in the opposite direction. Continue until all the folds stack up on each other.



Repeat the accordion fold in the other direction.



Place two pieces of wood, or any flat-shaped object, on the top and bottom of the bundle.



Bind the bundle with rubber bands.



This shibori technique is called kumo, or pleat and bind technique. Start by doing an accordion fold.



Bind several sections with rubber bands. Keep binding various sections until you make the fabric into a tight bundle.



This shibori technique is called Arashi, or storm/pole wrapping. Wrap the fabric around the PVC pipe.



Tie a piece of twine into a double knot at the base of the pipe.



Start wrapping the twine around the pipe. After a few wraps, scrunch the fabric down. Pull the twine to tighten.



Continue wrapping and scrunching the fabric.



Place the bound fabric into the dye bath. It should only take a couple of minutes for the dye to penetrate the fabric. For the Itajime and Arashi folds, wait about five to seven minutes.



Remove the bound fabric and let it drain to a drip. With indigo dye, the color doesn't set or turn blue until it oxidizes. The fabric will come out of the dye bath looking green.



Unbind the fabric and hang to dry. Use the shibori technique to add unique patterns to plain fabric.

Garden Fresh Arrangements



Are you hosting a dinner party and don't want to spend a ton of money on floral arrangements for your tabletop? No problem; forage in your garden and landscape. There's plenty out in your yard to use for a simple yet stylish tabletop décor. Think outside the box. Flowers aren't the only plants allowed on the table. This guide will show you how to look at your garden plants in a new light.



I love making arrangements with herbs. They offer beautiful color, texture, and amazing scent to an arrangement. This small arrangement features basil, rosemary, parsley, and zucchini blossoms. The zucchini blossom adds a fun

pop of yellow against the herbs. Bundle the herbs and blossoms and pop them in a half pint mason jar for a simple and elegant arrangement.



This is the most common arrangement I make. I wander through my garden and clip whatever herbs are available and bundle them together. The result is a garden fresh arrangement made with my favorite seasonal plants.



I call this combination “Light and Airy.” It features dried tree twigs, asparagus tops w/seeds, strawberry leaves, and sedum. It’s an earthy mixture of greens and browns with an airy feel. Unexpected elements like strawberry leaves and twigs add interest to the arrangement.



It’s obvious the tomatoes are the stars here. I love edible centerpieces.

Tomatoes pair well with herbs. Go ahead and mix and match varieties of tomatoes for added scale and texture.



This is a simple arrangement with a lot of style. The thyme, hen and chick, and hosta leaf combination offers a rustic feel. Even a simple hosta leaf can bring texture to a tablescape. The thyme and succulent are arranged in a mason jelly jar. This simple arrangement is perfect for individual place settings.



Creating a theme around an arrangement is a great way to decorate a tabletop. This arrangement features the three types of basil I grow in my garden: Genovese, purple, and globe. I added a few sprigs of chives for height. I like to call this one “Italian Dinner.” Add fresh tomatoes, pasta, or a loaf of bread to complete the look.



The next time you are planning a party or want to dress up your table, look to your garden and landscape for inspiration. Forage a few leaves, branches, and seasonal fruits and vegetables to add color and texture to your table.

Edible Centerpiece



Edible centerpieces are another way to showcase the season's bounty.

Whether the produce is from your garden or your local farmers market, displaying it front and center will garner attention from your guests. After the festivities, donate the produce to a local food pantry. Fresh produce is always appreciated.



Supplies

- Fresh produce

- Fresh herbs
- Container



The container I used here came with a grid for holding flowers. This is part of the Magnolia collection available at Target. You can use any type of container. To make a grid, use clear floral tape to form a grid across the opening of the container.



Use large leafy vegetables for the base. In my arrangement the base is kale.



Continue to build the base with another large/long vegetable.



Fill the middle with smaller produce.



Fill any holes or gaps between the produce with herbs.



Balance the color and texture of the centerpiece with a variety of fruit.



Play around with seasonal produce. There are many ways to customize the centerpiece to fit the theme of your occasion. Once the dinner or party is over, check out [AmpleHarvest.org](https://www.AmpleHarvest.org) to find a food pantry that will accept fresh produce.

Herb Napkin Rings



Here's a simple way to add a garden fresh detail to your dinner table.

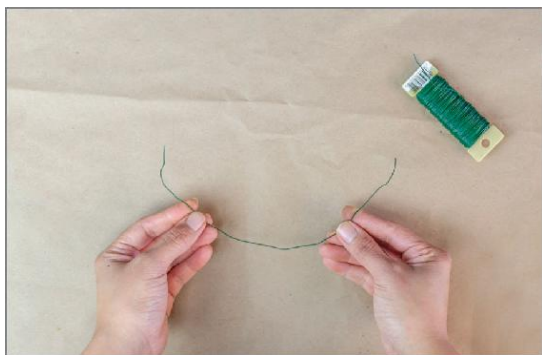
Woody stemmed herbs like rosemary, thyme, and oregano hold up to handling and being out of water for a good amount of time. These napkin rings are perfect for holiday meals or for a garden theme dinner party.



Supplies

- Floral paddle wire
- Wire cutter

- Fresh herbs with woody stems (rosemary, thyme, or oregano)
- Floral snips



Cut an 8-inch length of floral paddle wire. Form the wire into a 2-inch diameter ring, doubling the wire on top of itself.



Snip the herb sprigs into 2-inch sections. Cut a 6-inch piece of wire. Lay a sprig on top of the wire ring. Use the 6-inch piece of wire to wrap the stem around the ring. Lay another sprig at the base of the first sprig, slightly overlapping, and wrap the wire around the stem. Repeat two more times, or until the ring is half covered with herbs.



Trim off any excess wire.



Trim off the last sprig's stem so that it is flush with the wire ring.



Slip the herb ring onto a napkin. Experiment with other herbs and use a variety. Herb napkin rings will dress up a table for any occasion.





Chapter 7



Natural Home

Natural cleaning, air fresheners, and personal care products are easy to make with ingredients you probably already have in the house. I love to make my own cleaning products with ingredients I grow and harvest myself. I know exactly what is going into my handmade products and it gives me a sense of pride to know that I am fully using my garden to its potential. Making your own beauty products and cleaners is not hard at all, and you'll find that they are just as effective as commercially produced ones.

Herbal Lotion Bars



I discovered lotion bars a few years ago when my rough garden hands needed some TLC. I rarely wear gloves when I garden because I don't remember to grab them, which means my hands are generally in rough shape during the growing season. Lotion bars are a combination of oils and beeswax, and are solid at room temperature. They rejuvenate dry skin and leave a soothing barrier of protection. Once you try them, you'll never look at regular lotion again.



Supplies

- Beeswax
- Cocoa butter
- Coconut oil
- Dried herbs (roses, lavender, calendula petals)
- Glass jar
- Scale
- Silicone mold
- Empty tin can
- Small saucepan



Lotion bars need a one-to-one-to-one ratio of beeswax, cocoa butter, and coconut oil. The best way to get this ratio correct is to weigh the ingredients. Do not combine the three ingredients yet.



Place a handful of herbs in a jar and add the coconut oil. Place the jar into a pan of water so that the water comes about halfway up the sides of the jar. Heat over low heat for 6 to 8 hours, allowing the herbs to infuse into the oil. You can infuse it for a shorter amount of time, but you won't get all the essence of the herbs. Once the oil is infused, let it cool slightly, then strain.



Melt the beeswax and cocoa butter together in a double boiler made with a tin can set into a pot of water.



Once the cocoa butter and beeswax are melted, add in the infused coconut oil. Mix until combined.



Pour the mixture into a silicone mold. Let it cool for at least an hour, then pop it out of the mold. To use, rub the lotion bar between your palms to warm up the surface. The bar will slightly soften, releasing moisturizing goodness onto your skin. Lotion bars work great on dry hands, elbows, and feet.

Thyme and Lemon All Purpose Cleaner



This simple cleaner features just four ingredients. With the natural antibacterial properties of lemon and thyme, this all-purpose cleaner will disinfect surfaces without use of additional chemicals. Best of all, the cleaner is completely food safe and much more affordable than store-bought cleaners.



Supplies

- Lemon

- Handful of fresh thyme
- Vodka*
- White vinegar
- Glass pint jar with lid

*The vodka helps the cleaner dry faster on surfaces. You can use any clear food grade alcohol.



Slice the lemon into rounds. Place the thyme and sliced lemons into a glass pint jar.



Pour in the vodka until the thyme and lemon are just covered. Let the mixture steep in a cool, dark place for two weeks.



After the two weeks, strain the mixture into a glass spray bottle. Top the bottle off with white vinegar. The cleaner can be used on any type of surface and even come in contact with food. Happy cleaning!

Herb and Flower Sachets



Potpourri has a reputation for being over-perfumed and chock full of dyed flowers. Times have changed and so has potpourri. It's time to reexamine this old-fashioned method of freshening up a room. I dry flower petals and herbs all summer just for this purpose. Unlike those old musty sachets of dried rose petals you see in the store, this DIY version is full of garden goodness that will freshen up your home.

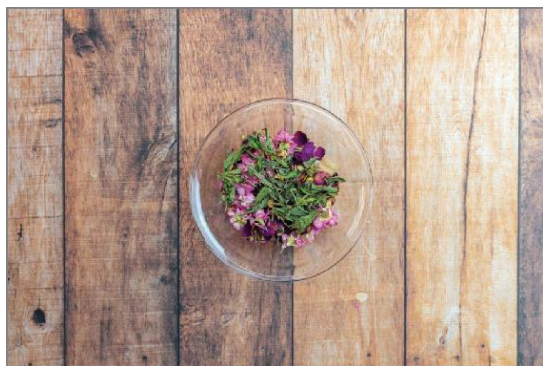


Supplies

- 2 tablespoons cedarwood chips
- ½ cup medium grain sea salt
- 1 cup of dried flowers and herbs
- Essential oils
- Organza bags



Mix the cedarwood chips and sea salt together in a bowl. The wood chips and salt will absorb and hold the scent of the potpourri. Cedar is also a natural insect deterrent.



Add in the dried flowers and herbs. Mix well.



Essential oils are the highly concentrated version of the natural oils in plants. A little goes a long way. Try complimentary scent combinations when adding to your potpourri. I used sandalwood and a spring floral blend.



Add 20 to 30 drops of essential oils to your mixture. Stir well.



Fill the organza bags with the potpourri mixture. Place the bags of potpourri in drawers, closets, or any area you want to freshen up in your home.

Hot Pepper Sore Muscle Rub



I'm a fan of spicy food and regularly grow several varieties of chili peppers in my vegetable garden. Another reason I grow chili peppers is for their many medicinal properties, including pain relief. The peppers' heat comes from capsaicin, a compound produced to protect the peppers from fungal attack. Many over-the-counter pain relievers have capsaicin in them. You can make your own topical pain reliever with the freshly grown chilis from the garden.



Supplies

- ½ cup coconut oil
- 4-ounce glass jar
- Saucepan
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 jalapeno, sliced
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
- 1 tablespoon peppercorns
- Bamboo skewer
- 2 tablespoons beeswax pellets
- Peppermint essential oil
- Small strainer
- Cheesecloth or coffee filter
- Measuring cup
- 4-ounce candle tin



Add the coconut oil to a glass jar. Place the jar into a saucepan to create a double boiler. Fill the saucepan with enough water to come half-way up the jar. Heat until the oil is melted.



Add the olive oil to the coconut oil.



Add the jalapeno, ginger, and peppercorns (I use a bamboo skewer to transfer these ingredients into the oil without splashing). Once the oil is slightly warm, give it a stir and then turn off the stove.



Allow it to sit for half an hour and then repeat the process. Warm it again and allow to infuse one to two more times for a stronger oil. Overall this process should take 1 to 2 hours.



Line the strainer with the cheesecloth or coffee filter. Strain the mixture over a measuring cup, then pour it back into the jar. Add the beeswax and place the jar back into the double boiler. Heat until melted. Remove the jar from the pan and let it cool slightly.



Add 20 to 30 drops of peppermint essential oil. The peppermint will provide a cooling sensation on the skin, while the capsaicin from the pepper and jalapeno will penetrate the sore muscles with pain-relieving warmth.



Pour the mixture into a 4-ounce candle tin. Store airtight in a cool, dry place.



To use, rub affected area with a small amount of hot pepper sore muscle rub. Avoid the area around the eyes or other sensitive areas. Wash hands thoroughly after application.

Clay Essential Oil Diffuser



I received an essential oil diffuser necklace for a Mother's Day gift a few years ago. I thought it was genius. Instead of diffusing essential oils all through my house with electric diffusers, I decided to replicate the necklace so I could hang them anywhere without having to plug them in.



Supplies

- Natural clay
- Two 1/4-inch wood slats

- Rolling pin
- 2-inch circle cookie cutter
- Decorative round stamp
- Pointed wood dowel or chopstick
- Toothpicks
- Waxed linen
- Wooden bead



Wedge a handful of clay to release the air bubbles.



Lay out the wood slats, then roll the clay flat with the rolling pin.



Cut out disks from the clay with the cookie cutter.



Use the toothpicks to smooth the edges.



Set the stamp with its design facing up. Put the clay disk on top of the stamp and lightly roll it with the rolling pin. I found that this method will not flatten out the clay disk as much.



Peel off the clay disk.



Use the toothpicks to smooth out the edges (if needed).



Use the pointy wood dowel or chopstick to make a hole in the top center of the disk. Let the clay disks dry overnight.



Cut a 2-foot length of wax linen. Fold it in half and insert the folded end through the hole in the clay disk.



Slip on a wooden bead and tie an overhand knot. Knot the tail ends too.



To use, add a few drops of essential oils to the front of the clay disk. The natural clay will absorb the oil and infuse the air around it with its fresh scent.

Herbal Bug Repellent Simmer Jars



There's nothing that can ruin a wonderful summer evening faster than an annoying mosquito. As much as I detest the insect, I cannot bring myself to slather my skin with noxious bug repelling chemicals. Luckily, there are many plants that produce scents that can effectively repel insects naturally.



Supplies

- Fresh rosemary, spearmint, and/or lemon balm

- Dried or fresh citrus slices
- Glass quart jars
- Floating candles



There are several herbs known to repel insects. My herbs of choice are lemon balm, spearmint, and rosemary.



Add a slice of citrus to the bottom of a glass jar.



Pack the jar the rest of the way with a few sprigs each of lemon balm, rosemary, and spearmint.



Fill the jar just to the bottom rim with water. Add a floating candle.



Light the candles. The warmth from the candles will activate the scent from the herbs and citrus. Place the bug repellent simmer jars all over your patio or deck to help keep the mosquitoes at bay.

Wax Sachets



Wax sachets are similar to scented candles, but without the fire. They're a combination of dried botanicals and fragrance incased in wax for longevity. They are a pretty way to make your home smell amazing! Wax sachets make wonderful hostess gifts.



Supplies

- 2 cups soy wax flakes
- Tin can

- Saucepan
- Silicone molds
- 1 teaspoon essential oil of your choice
- 2 teaspoons dried flower petals, herbs, or citrus
- Twine
- Long metal nail or skewer
- Candle warmer or saucepan (to create a double boiler)



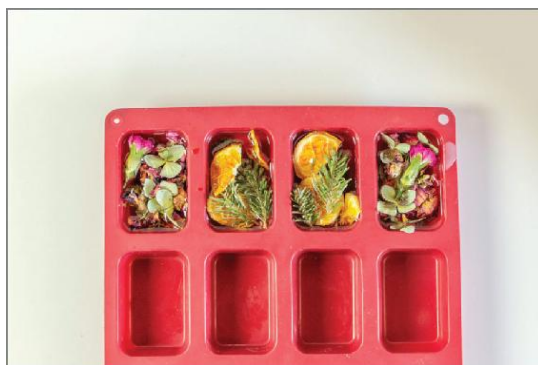
Add the soy wax to a tin can and place into a saucepan (to create a double boiler) filled with water about halfway up the tin or place tin can onto a candle warmer. Heat the wax until melted.



Pour the wax into silicone molds.



Add 20 to 30 drops of essential oils to each of the molds.



Submerge botanicals into the wax. Let the wax cool and harden.



Once the sachets are cool and solid, pop them out of the silicone molds. Heat up the tip of a nail or metal skewer. Plunge the heated metal tip in the top center or corner of the sachet. Repeat this process until you melt a hole completely through the wax bar. Go slowly and do not push. Let the heat melt the wax. If you push too much, the wax will split.



Insert a length of twine through the hole in the sachet and tie the tails together with an overhand knot. Hang the sachets or place them in drawers for a fresh, natural scent.

Fragrant Simmer Pots



Slowly simmering spices, fruit, and herbs is my favorite way to diffuse scent in my home. Simmer pots will fill your entire home with the most wonderful aroma and last throughout the day. It also helps add humidity to the air, which is perfect during the dry, winter months. Simmer pots can be tailored to suit your preferences. Experiment with different spice and herb combinations.



Supplies

- Slow cooker
- Fresh mint
- Fresh rosemary
- Dried or fresh citrus
- Pine or fir needles
- Pine cones
- Cinnamon sticks
- Cloves
- Star anise
- Vanilla extract



The combination of lemon, vanilla, rosemary, and mint is perfect for everyday use. The fresh scent of the mint and lemon with the earthiness of the vanilla and rosemary is heavenly.



You can't go wrong with oranges and cinnamon. It's the perfect scent to brew on crisp, fall days. This spicy combination features a stick of cinnamon, a tablespoon of cloves and allspice, and a few slices of oranges.



Get into the holiday season with a wintergreen blend. Combine pine or fir needles, pine cones, and pine/wintergreen essential oils. It's the perfect blend for holiday parties or just sipping cocoa by the fire.



To put together a simmer pot, choose a medium-sized pot or slow cooker and fill $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water. Add in herbs/spices/extracts/fruit. Bring water to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer. Replenish the water as needed.



Simmer pot ingredients make wonderful hostess or housewarming gifts too!

Four Thieves Vinegar



Some say that four thieves vinegar had the power to cure the plague.

According to legend, there was a band of four thieves who made a fortune by stealing from the bodies of people who had died from the bubonic plague. When the criminals were arrested, they claimed they had a tonic that prevented them from becoming infected. That tonic was what is now known as four thieves vinegar. The recipe for four thieves vinegar typically centers around herbs that have been known for their antibacterial, antiviral, antiseptic, and antifungal properties for centuries. It's a simple mixture that has a myriad of uses: a simple remedy against many illnesses, a powerful disinfectant, and bug spray.



Supplies

- 1 tablespoon dried sage
- 1 tablespoon dried rosemary
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme
- 1 tablespoon dried lavender flowers
- Glass quart jar
- 4 cloves garlic (optional)
- 2 cups raw apple cider vinegar
- 8-ounce spray bottle



I grow all these herbs in my garden, but it's best to dehydrate the herbs before you add them to the vinegar. Removing the moisture from herbs concentrates the flavor and essential oils in the herbs. Wash the herbs and spin dry.



Dry the herbs with an electric dehydrator, or on a rack.



Once the herbs are dried, add them to a quart jar along with the garlic cloves. Add the 2 cups of vinegar. The herbs need to steep in the vinegar for 6 to 8 weeks. After steeping, strain the vinegar. Store the four thieves vinegar in smaller jars for easy use.



To use the vinegar as a bug repellent, put $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the vinegar in an 8-ounce spray bottle and fill the rest with water. Spray on skin and clothes when outdoors during mosquito season. To use it as a disinfectant, fill a spray bottle $\frac{1}{4}$ the way with the vinegar and top with water. Use on any surfaces that you need to disinfect. It can also be taken as a tonic for colds. To use as a tonic, dilute a tablespoon in water or tea and drink daily until cold symptoms improve.